Barcode : 99999990037168
Title - caste and communication in an indian village
Author - majumdar, d. n.
Language - english
Pages - 372
Publication Year - 1959
Barcode EAN.UCC-13
9 999999 003716

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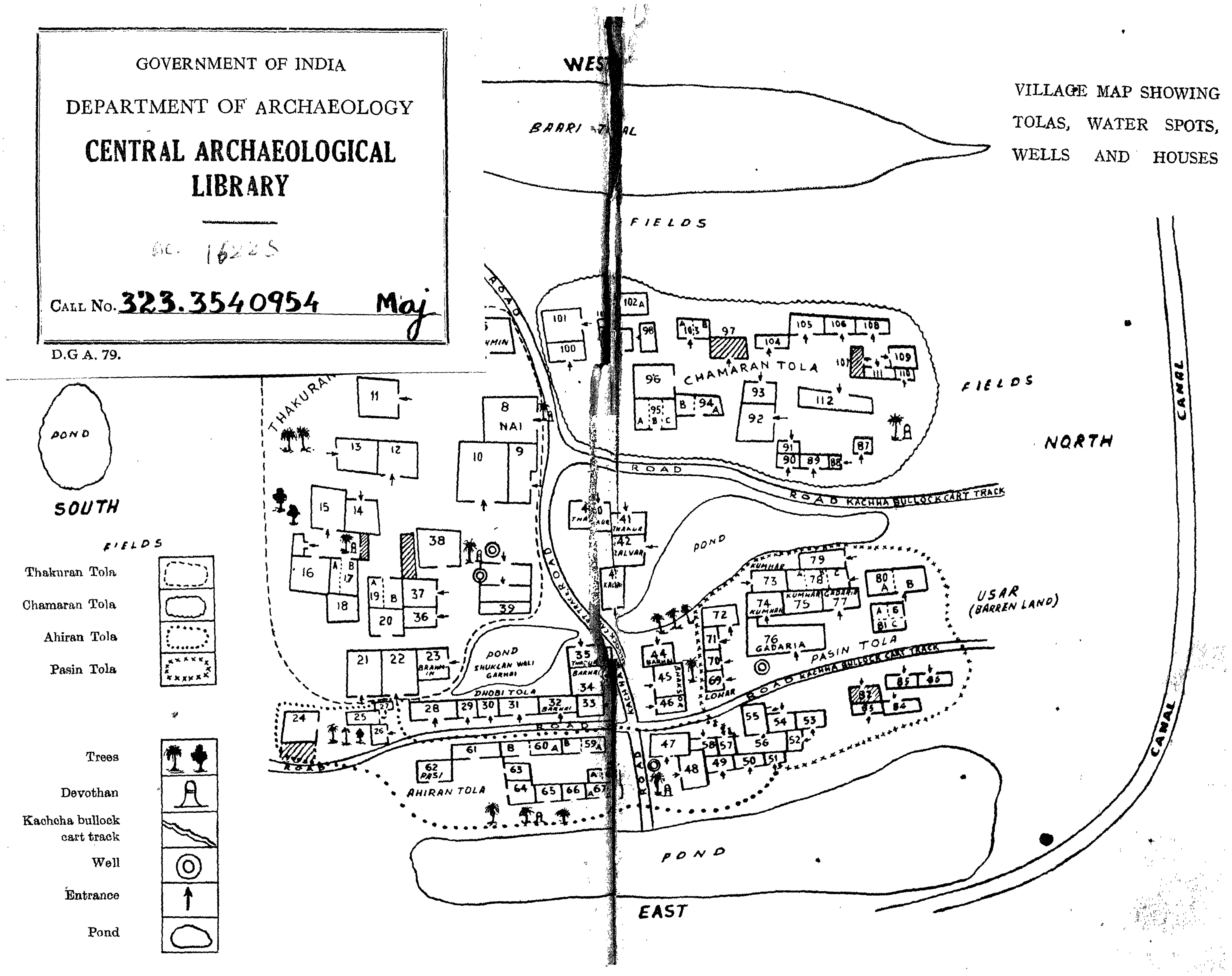

CASTE AND COMMUNICATION IN AN INDIAN VILLAGE

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CASTE
AND
COMMUNICATION
IN AN
INDIAN VILLAGE

by

D. N. MAJUMDAR

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PRIVATE LIMITED, BOMBAY AND PUBLISHED BY P. S.
JAYASINGHE, ASIA PUBLISHING HOUSE, BOMBAY

TO

THE PEOPLE OF MOHANA

AND TO

THE FIELD TEAM

WHO MADE THEM ARTICULATE

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Introduction

I

INDIA is indeed a land of villages. The pulse of India can be felt in the villages ; according to the Census of 1951, there are for every thousand urban people in India, 6,400 living in the villages. Only 7% of her population lives in the cities, of 100,000 people or more. While this is so, the villages of India do not offer one social pattern ; there are great variations in climate, topography and in population and, therefore, the 'Indian village', as we often speak of it, is a misnomer. Emphasis must necessarily be on regional patterns.

In Uttar Pradesh, a village is a cluster of mud houses, surrounded by fields and an occasional mango orchard. There may be no road leading to or from the village, the villagers using the boundary ridges of their fields to negotiate their entry into or exit from their houses. Often the crops, sugar-cane or corn plants, hide the village from view. Inside the village there are narrow alleys and lanes which often merge into a square or open space, the centre of village activities. Here a Gandhi *Chabutra* or a temple may be built, or a primary school may function in a house donated by the headman or the zamindar. Most of the new school buildings, built by the District Board or the Education Department, are situated outside the village, with open spaces all around them. The common landmarks in the village are the ponds, tanks or wells and temples, which are owned either by the village or by individual families. All villages do not have shops, or markets, weekly or otherwise. Those that have are usually densely inhabited and numerically large. Several villages may be served by a weekly market, a common school, and by a common pasture, where the cattle are driven for forage, in charge of the village Ahir or old women. Often children are trained to tend the cattle. All villagers are engaged in agriculture. They live on the produce of their fields, or by sharing crop with the owners,

while occasional migration to cities for wages, some supplementary occupations, and labour for contractors and Government, help the villagers to size up to the needs of rural living. The Planning Commission estimated in 1948 that 68.2% of the entire population was employed in agriculture. This would leave a small fraction of the rural population depending wholly and solely on other kinds of labour, occupation and professions. The cultivators are either owner-cultivators, or non-owner hereditary tenants or tenants-at-will ; non-cultivators include field labourers, permanently or seasonally engaged. There are also village artisans and village servants, who are now on evil days, living, if they are following their traditional occupation, a lean life. In every village, there used to be a zamindar family split up into several small units, living on rents they received, now cultivating their own land and maintaining their status in the village polity by money-lending and supplementary occupations with or without Government support and patronage. The few shopkeepers, who supply the local needs of the villagers, combine money-lending and other businesses, and feel the pulse of the village better than the landlords, officials, Panchayat, or village leaders. The dominant castes in the village are the Brahmin and the Thakur, usually the latter, whose social lead is still accepted by the village, though occasionally they are repudiated, without any possible redress, or much protest by the higher castes. When the factions within these high castes fight against one another, the influence and prestige of the higher castes receive rude shocks, but when the factions combine, they can curb the revolt of the lower castes. There is today an acceptance of 'social equality' and 'sharing of opportunities' which have eased village tension in some areas, aggravated it in others; and constant hissing is heard, though it may not always lead to overt hostility. In spite of clash of interests and occasional friction among castes, the village has to be a working social unit, and villagers normally feel closely related to one another, and more often they speak of the village as 'our village' and in terms of 'we' rather than 'they', and in theory at least a village behaves as a kinship group, or 'we group'. Marriage within the village is not desired, though tolerated, and conventional terms of address used by the villagers unite them and throw them into one another's arms, in times of crises or inter-village disputes.

The village can be seen either as a unit of territorial organisation, in social or political alignment, as a symbiotic grouping of castes, high and low, or as a cultural background, of familial relationship, all of which have developed corporate living and factional jealousies. We have often rated our rural life as a peaceful structural nexus or as a matrix of colossal disharmony and factional intrigues, and both the stereotypes are partially true, particularly when we see the village at a distance, or for a short period.

The village has been, and is, an intimate group. In tribal villages, we have both a spatial and kinship grouping. In those villages particularly, where the members of the village are also descended from a common ancestor or affiliate themselves on grounds of common totemic ties, the village solidarity has been great, and the feigned or real kinship is marked by rules of marriage which prohibit local marriage ties, and develop exogamic rules, which are considered sacred and sacrosant.

Recent dents into the family structure of the Indian villages have made our rural life factionally oriented, though this factionalism works within the village, and does not ordinarily step beyond its confines. The common purse, common kitchen and common property, in land, which characterised joint family life, are no longer sacred, and nucleurisation of families, separate kitchen and splitting of property, and fragmentation of holdings are more common today than ever before. Even then a casual visitor finds more emotional ties and reciprocal relationships in the village than he does in urban life. Villagers still worship jointly, and the village temple or sacred places still bring together castes and families, who uphold traditional rituals and practices for the benefit of the village, and not necessarily of any particular caste or family. The village priest caters for all, and keeps the temple god or goddess in trim for defensive security, but social ceremonies may be partitioned on caste lines and taboo and pollution may determine the limits of joint participation, giving rise to caste priesthood and diverse ritual practices. Money and influence secure social prestige, but they work within the traditional social hierarchy, which places the castes in a scale of social precedence, circumvention being possible through ingenious devices. The zamindar, if he belongs to any high caste, still has his say in the affairs of the village, and traditional loyalty

still secures to the zamindar respect and consideration which his changed position today does not warrant. The castes in the village are high and low, but each caste is separate and maintains social distance from other castes on grounds both of purity and pollution. The higher castes look down upon the lower, longingly and lingeringly expecting services and loyalty from them. The lower castes blame the higher ones for their backwardness and organise resistance and hostility, on grounds real and imaginary. In the end, there is always some kind of compromise and acceptance, which are assumed as cooperation but which, in fact, include conflict and tension. Each village, however, is different from the other, even in the same region, and the web of life depends upon the members of each caste who own land. Caste professions have been in jeopardy since long, and professional affiliation no longer describes a caste in a village. All castes do similar work, but their relations are still determined by tradition and place in the social hierarchy. Caste claims are still met with frowns, but there is a tolerance and awareness among the castes, high and low, which make them live and let live.

2

THE PRESENT village study was initiated under the auspices of the Cornell-Lucknow research project financed by the Ford Foundation. In the agreement signed by Prof. M. E. Opler of Cornell University, and on behalf of the Lucknow University by the author, as Joint Directors of the project, the Department of Anthropology at Lucknow was required to undertake some village studies. The village Mohana in the Lucknow district, which lies within ten miles from Lucknow city, was chosen for a base line study. This village was not included in the Community Development blocks, nor in the N.E.S., and it was felt that an intensive study of a village with urban contacts might provide the bench-mark data on rural progress and social awareness, which are the fondest hopes of the Community Development administration. The Department of Anthropology selected, later on, a backward village in the Mirzapur district, a tribal-cum-rural centre where the C.D.P. has been functioning. This assignment also has been completed.

Due to the premature withdrawal of the Cornell University from its India programme at Rankhandi (Saharanpur district, U.P.) where it staked out a three-year intensive evaluation study, the Programme Evaluation Organisation, Planning Commission, stepped in to help the Lucknow Department of Anthropology to complete the assignment it had accepted, and this timely assistance made it possible for us to complete the work, which we have done.

In Mohana our approach has been ethnographically oriented, while in Dhanaura, in Mirzapur, we have studied culture change, and the impact of the C.D.P. on rural life and aspirations.

3

THE VILLAGE study we are presenting here has been a continuous research in which the author as Director has had the assistance of many investigators who were trained by him and whose work was constantly supervised by him. The period spent in the field was more than two years. As the village lies within ten miles of the University and could be reached by car, though on *kachcha* roads, constant supervision was possible and, therefore, the responsibility for the statements lies entirely with the Director—in this case, the author. A fortunate fact with regard to this study is the intimate knowledge that the Director has of the village—which has for years been the happy resting place for him when he wanted to relax and live away from the city. The ex-zamindar family provided accommodation and occasionally acted as the host, and this contact helped the field team to work with understanding and confidence ; little effort was needed to establish *rapport.*

The field team consisted of Sri Chandra Sen, M.A., B.SC., Sri Sunil Misra, M.A., Sri Mahesh Chandra, M.A. and (for part of the time) Sri Rajendra Nath Srivastava, M.A. The processing of the huge primary data was assisted by Miss Hepsie David, M.A., to whom our debt is the heaviest. The mass of data we possess would have easily required several volumes to present but, thanks to Miss David's resourcefulness, an integrated account could be pieced together for immediate release. The rest of the data is being processed for further use. The charts and diagrams have been prepared for us by our research assistant, Mrs. Esther Tewari, M.A.,

who has helped us since 1946, and my personal obligation to her is considerable. Throughout our inquiry, the field team worked with full confidence and cordial relationship and frequent discussion and checking of reports were done in a spirit of understanding and with mutual benefit. A part of the ethnographic material was printed earlier in the *Eastern Anthropologist,* particularly the chapter 'Inter-Caste Relations' which we are reproducing after revision. We are grateful to the editors of the journal for permission to reprint the same.

We are also grateful to Prof. D. G. Karve, former Director, Programme Evaluation Organisation, for competent steering of the Cornell-Lucknow research project on behalf of the Planning Commission. He always took keen interest in this work, and advised us on occasions when we sought his help. Dr. V. Nath, his successor, also took informed interest in our work, and so did Sri Tarlok Singh, I.C.S., Joint Secretary, Planning Commission. To all of them we are grateful. Last but not the least, we are deeply beholden to Acharya Sri Jugal Kishore, then Vice-Chancellor and now Minister for Social Welfare, Uttar Pradesh, for his constant encouragement and understanding of our point of view whenever we needed his help and guidance.

NOTE : *All the names of places and persons in this book are fictitious.*

1. The Village Background

MOHANA IS a medium-sized, multi-caste village in Uttar Pradesh, about eight miles north of Lucknow, the State capital. It is connected with Lucknow by six miles of metalled, motorable road and two miles of a *kachcha*, feeder road, motorable in dry weather, but generally covered by bullock cart, bicycle, *ekka* or on foot. The last two-mile stretch is not easily negotiable in the rainy season when the feeder road becomes slushy and, in places, is under knee-deep water.

No written record of the village history could be traced, but following up the genealogical tree of the Thakurs who are the earliest inhabitants of this village, a thirteen-generation chain, going back to over three hundred years, has been traced. The Thakurs of a neighbouring village, about five miles from Mohana, narrate some account of the early history of this region. In the absence of any official record, the authenticity of their version is not verifiable, but its beginning and the early links of the genealogical tree of the Thakurs do corroborate each other.

History. It is said that about the middle of the eighteenth century, when the decline of the Mughal kingdom had started, a rebellion broke out in this part of the country. One Saadat Khan, the then governor of Oudh, declared himself independent of the Mughal Crown, proclaiming himself the local ruler. An army under one Chauhan Thakur of Chamrai village, District Mainpuri, was sent from Delhi, the Mughal capital, to crush this rebellion. The army chief succeeded in conquering 52 villages but later, instead of finishing the assigned task of suppressing the rebellion completely, himself settled down in a village which is about ten miles from Lucknow railway station. Before his death, he divided these 52 villages into three shares equal in area and distributed them among his three sons. The eldest son got 32 villages in his share, the second 12, and the third eight villages. The second son, Bachh Raj Singh Chauhan, who got 12 villages in his share, started living in a

village, about two miles south-west of Mohana. Thakur Bachh Raj Singh had three sons who, after their father's death, inherited four villages each. The eldest brother went over to village Shampur, the second settled down in Gadana, while the youngest brother, Thakur Chandra Sen, started living in Mohana. The present Chauhan families of the village—out of the 22 Thakur families in Mohana, 20 are Chauhan—are the descendants of Thakur Chandra Sen Singh Chauhan. The Thakurs of the village Gadana claim that Thakur Phursat Singh, their ancestor, was the eldest son of Bachh Raj Singh and, therefore, they are the 'senior' members of the family. But the Thakurs of Shampur maintain that their ancestor, Thakur Bhim Sen, was the eldest son of Thakur Bachh Raj Singh and their status in the *khandan* is superior to that of descendants of younger brothers. The Thakurs of Mohana support the claim of the Thakurs of Shampur and go to that village for the annual *Holi* celebrations in the month of *Phagun* (March), when the Thakurs from these 11 villages assemble together. The Thakurs of the twelfth village, Gadana, abstain from these annual celebrations as a mark of protest.

Demography. About a hundred years ago the village population is reported to have been about four hundred. The *Kutumb* (Family) Register, 1952, records 806 persons in Mohana, including adjacent hamlets. A field census carried out in March, 1955, making a door-to-door investigation of all the 112 houses, checking the earlier official record and bringing it up-to-date, counted 603 persons in Mohana village. This small number, however, makes a 15-caste community. Numerically, the important castes are the Chamar, who form about 23.5% of the village population; the Thakur, constituting about 21.5%; Pasi, 18.5%; and Ahir, who are 10.8% of the village population. Thus, while four castes cover over 74% of the entire village population, the rest one-fourth population comprises 11 castes, of which again half, i.e. about 11.4%, are Kumhar and Dhobi. The latest caste-wise and sex-wise population figures are given in Table I. There are 80 females for every 100 males.

Table II and Table III show the birth and death record of Mohana village from 1941 to 1954. The official record of births and deaths is not found together in one place; this has to be collected from three different official sources.

Table I

CASTE AND SEX-WISE POPULATION OF VILLAGE MOHANA

	Caste	1952[1] Male	1952[1] Female	1952[1] Total	1955[2] Male	1955[2] Female	1955[2] Total	%
1.	Chamar	71	68	139	72	69	141	23.5
2.	Thakur	69	53	122	78	51	129	21.5
3.	Pasi	59	49	108	65	46	111	18.5
4.	Ahir	36	28	64	33	32	65	10.8
5.	Kumhar	15	18	33	18	17	35	5.8
6.	Dhobi	19	14	33	20	14	34	5.6
7.	Nai	8	8	16	9	10	19	3.1
8.	Barhai	11	3	14	12	3	15	2.5
9.	Kalwar	5	6	11	7	6	13	2.1
10.	Gadaria	4	8	12	4	8	12	2.0
11.	Lohar	3	4	7	6	4	10	1.6
12.	Brahmin	6	3	9	6	3	9	1.5
13.	Bhaksor	4	2	6	4	2	6	1.0
14.	Kathik	—	—	—	2	1	3	0.5
15.	Kurmi	1	—	1	1	—	1	0.1
	Total	311	264	575	335	268	603	100.0

[1] 1952 figures are from the official records.

[2] 1955 figures are the official figures brought up-to-date (March, 1955) and checked family-wise in the village.

Table II

NUMBER OF BIRTHS AND DEATHS
(1941-1954)

Year	*No. of births*	*No. of deaths*
1941	22	15
1942	24	13
1943 } 1944 }	22	28
1945	21	Not available
1946	17	15
1947	20	22
1948	20	19
1949	Not available	
1950	19	16
1951	16	8
1952	26	10
1953	34	6
1954	18	4

Table III

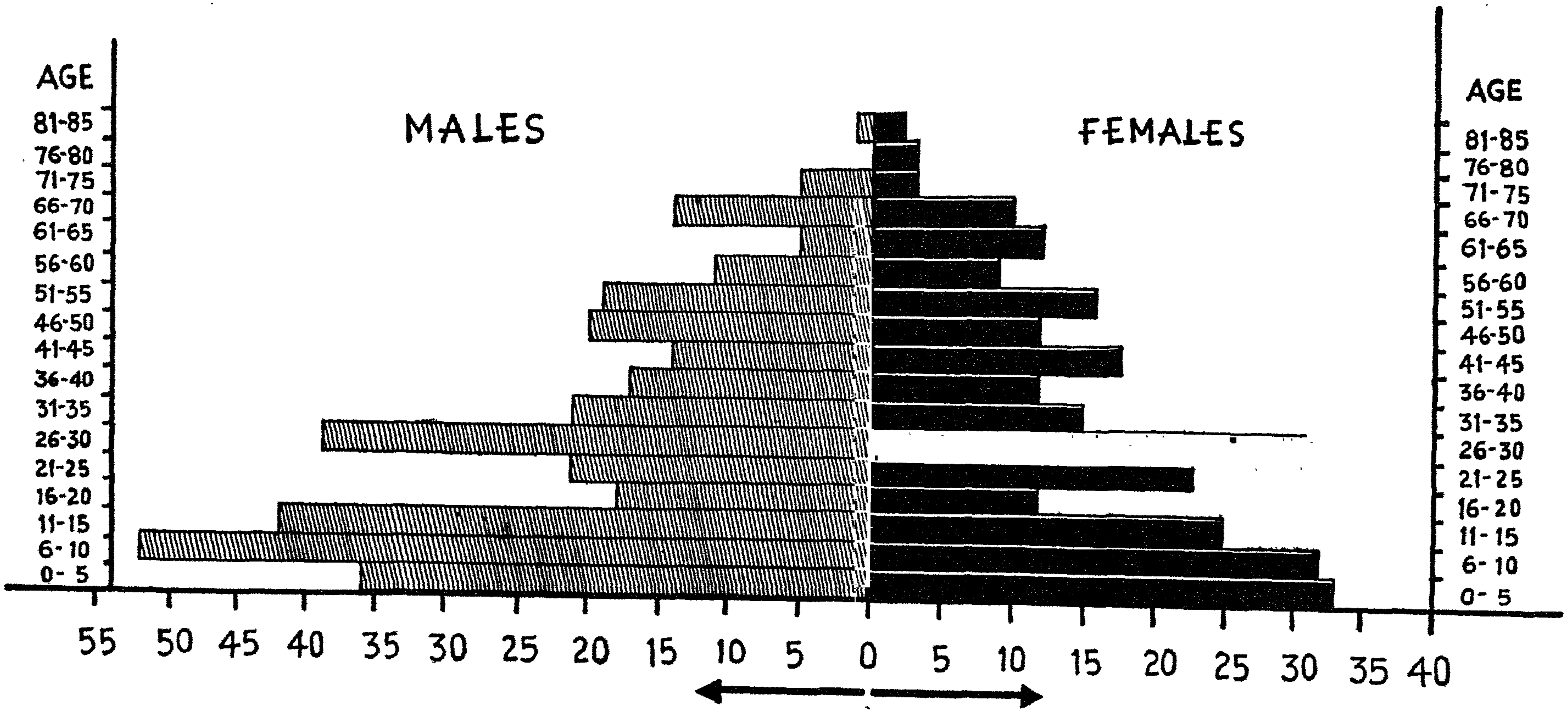
NUMBER OF DEATHS, AGE-WISE
(1941-1954)†

Age-group	1941	42	43	44	46	47	48	50	51	52	53	54	*Total*
1—5	9	3	3	8	4	7	8	12	3	6	2	3	68
6—10	—	—	1	1	3	2	1	1	—	—	—	—	9
11—20	3	—	1	3	—	1	—	2	—	—	—	—	10
21—30	1	—	1	2	—	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	8
31—40	—	2	1	3	—	—	1	—	2	—	—	—	9
41—50	—	3	—	1	2	—	1	—	—	1	1	—	9
51—60	1	1	—	—	2	4	3	—	1	—	1	1	14
61—70	1	3	—	—	2	1	3	—	1	2	—	—	13
71—80	—	1	—	—	2	2	1	1	1	—	2	—	10
Above 80	—	—	3	—	—	—	1	—	—	1	—	—	5
Total deaths	15	13	10	18	15	21	19	16	8	10	6	4	155

† Figures for 1945 and 1949 not available.

GRAPH SHOWING SEX-RATIO

Indicates a preponderance of males over females in both births and deaths



In a small population of about six hundred, it may seem pointless to talk of birth and death rates, but the data do corroborate the general tendencies noticed in Indian rural demographic investigations. In the context of small figures, as of village Mohana, population percentages may not be very vital or revealing, but the manner in which different castes are dovetailed into a complex but self-sufficient community—the 'democracy of the East', as the Indian village has been called, each group having an assigned role, prescribed by tradition, preserved by custom—is significantly reflective of the Indian rural social structure, as it has been through the centuries, and which, with the attainment of political independence of the country the developmental programmes seek to change to bring it in tune with the changed times and needs.

Economic nexus. The basis of the village economy is agriculture. Of the 15 castes, comprising Mohana village, 14 depend upon land either wholly or in part. Bhaksor is the only group which still continues to find its old occupation of basket-making sufficient and sufficing for its requirements. Otherwise even the Brahmin, who, according to Hindu religious tenets, are not allowed to touch the *hal* (plough) and whose exclusive interest should centre round learning and priesthood, have taken to agriculture. One Brahmin family has, in fact, given up its caste occupation and is exclusively engaged in agriculture. The *purohit* family also has land, which it has given out for cultivation on *batai* basis. Other main occupations practised in the village are: *Barhaigiri* (carpentry), *Lohari* (blacksmithy), *Kumhari* (pot-making), washing clothes, hair-cutting and basket-making. But most of the members of the castes who formerly engaged themselves exclusively in one of these occupations either now have land of their own or cultivate someone else's land on *batai* or *pot* basis. There are four shops in the village, two owned by two Kalwar families, one by Maiku Kathik and one recently started by a Thakur.

A study of the record of landholdings of different castes reveals some interesting features. Table IV shows that the Thakurs, who are numerically less than 20% of the total village population, own more than 40% of the land, while the Chamars and the Pasis, who together constitute double the number of Thakurs, own less than 30% of the village land.

It may be noticed from Table IV that two castes, Bhaksor and Kathik, do not have any land of their own. Kathiks, however, cultivate some land which they have taken on *batai* basis. Amongst

Table IV

VILLAGE LANDHOLDINGS

	Caste	*Landholdings** (pakka bighas)	*% of total landholdings*
1.	Thakur	170	41.3
2.	Pasi	62	15.0
3.	Chamar	52	12.6
4.	Ahir	39	9.4
5.	Kumhar	35	8.5
6.	Gadaria	14	3.4
7.	Barhai	9	2.1
8.	Dhobi	13	3.1
9.	Nai	1	0.24
10.	Kalwar	4	0.97
11.	Brahmin	9	2.18
12.	Kurmi	1	0.24
13.	Lohar	2	0.48
14.	Kathik	—	—
15.	Bhaksor	—	—
	Total	411	99.51

* Fractions of less than half a *bigha* have not been included and of more than half a *bigha* have been counted as one *bigha.*

Table V

NUMBER OF FAMILIES, CASTE-WISE, GROWING SURPLUS GRAIN AND THOSE SELF-SUFFICIENT IN GRAIN

	Caste	*Total no. of families*	*Self-sufficient in grain*	*Surplus in grain*
1.	Thakur	22	4	—
2.	Brahmin	3	1	—
3.	Barhai	3	2	—
4.	Kumhar	5	4	1
5.	Ahir	18	3	1
6.	Pasi	21	1	—
7.	Chamar	29	1	—
8.	Lohar	1	1	—
9.	Dhobi	7	2	1
10.	Nai	3	1	—

the other castes, four Chamar families, two Ahir families, one Barhai family and one Thakur family do not own any land.

Table V shows the position of families in different castes who grow sufficient grain for their own consumption and those who also have some marketable surplus. This surplus is generally sold in the village itself, to a Kalwar, who resells it at the Kandion bi-weekly market. Sometimes the villagers themselves carry the grain on their bicycles to Kandion market. It is seldom that they have so much marketable surplus of grain as to need a bullock cart for transportation.

The three main crops in the village are: *Aghan-ki-Fasal* (kharif crop), which includes *Bajra, Dhan, Urd, Kodon, Sawan, Choti Jwar*

and *Makai*; *Chet-ki-Fasal* (rabi crop), which includes wheat, gram, barley, mustard, *Matar* and pulses; and *Kharbooja-ki-Fasal*, which is the main cash crop of Mohana. The *Aghan-ki-Fasal* is cultivated in the beginning of the month of *Asarh* (July) and reaped in the month of *Bhadon*. Rabi crop is sown in the month of *Kartik* (November-December) and reaped in the month of *Chet* (March).

The villagers do not generally purchase seed from the market; they use the best grain of the previous year, which has been preserved. The three means of irrigation in the village are wells, tanks and canals. Well irrigation—there are five wells in the village—is known as the *pur* system. A big leather bag, known as *pur*, suspended from a rope, is lowered into the well, filled with water, and pulled out with the help of two bulls. The *pur* and the rope cost about thirteen rupees and two persons are required for completing the process of drawing water from the well and driving the bulls up and down.

Canal and tank irrigation is easy if the fields happen to be on a level with them. But, as is very often the case, the fields are situated at a higher level than the water, which has, therefore, to be carried to the higher field level. This system of carrying water to a higher level is called *Beri*. *Beri* consists of a big, hollow, canoe-like structure, supported by two ropes on the two sides. With its help water is lifted from the lower level of the tank and stored in a small pool, known as *Nadh*, from which, again, it is lifted and stored in another *Nadh* at a higher level. Lifted thus from *Nadh* to *Nadh*, the water is ultimately taken to the field. Four labourers are required to operate the *Beri* at every *Nadh*. The cost of irrigation by this method varies according to the distance between the tank and the field. Generally, from 16 to 20 labourers are employed whose wages come to about eight to ten rupees a day. By this process the whole field can be irrigated in a day.

When the crop is ready, all members of the family get together for reaping. Thakur women do not go to the field for harvesting, but women of other castes, especially of Chamar, Pasi and Ahir, do help in this work. Sometimes labourers are also engaged. If a labourer is engaged only for harvesting, he gets from 50 nP to a rupee a day, but if he has helped in all the processes from the

beginning to the end, he gets a one-twelfth share in the crop. The plants are cut down with a sickle and tied in a bundle called the *Bojh*. These *Bojhs* are collected at a certain place known as *Khalian*. These *Khalians*—there are six in the village—are all outside and away from the habitation. The *Bojhs* are opened in the *Khalian* and bulls help in separating grain from the straw. Grain is stored in jute bags or in big, clay pots, called *Dehra*, which can hold several maunds of grain.

Kharbooja (melon) crop has a special significance in the village economy. Mohana is an important exporter of melons to Lucknow. Every villager who has a field looks forward to this crop, for this is his main, if not his only, cash crop. While all the other field crops are almost wholly consumed by the cultivators' family or are sometimes used in barter, *Kharbooja* brings the villager some ready cash to which he very eagerly looks forward. The cash helps him in purchasing sundry goods for his family.

Urban contacts. Nine men from Mohana work in Lucknow. Of these one is a Thakur, one an Ahir, one Pasi and six are Chamar. The Thakur, who works as a peon in Lucknow, still keeps his residence in the village, going to the city every morning and returning home in the evening. The others live in Lucknow, the Ahir and the Pasi working as gardeners, earning between thirty and forty rupees a month, and the Chamars working as labourers, earning about a rupee or two a day each. Besides, some Ahir and one Nai daily carry milk from the village to Lucknow.

Though only the Ahir do organised business in milk and milk products, as many as 11 castes keep animals, which include cows, buffaloes, bulls and goats, in the village.

Notwithstanding its proximity to Lucknow which, besides being one of the modern cities of India, is one of the country's important educational centres, with a residential university having thousands of students on its rolls, the literacy rate and educational standards in Mohana are exceedingly low. A primary school has been in existence in the village since 1945, but it has started somewhat regular work only during the last few years. It has been found (Table VII) that while a good number of boys join the school in the first class, there is a sudden decline in the number of students after the first year.

Table VI

ANIMAL CENSUS OF MOHANA

	Caste	*Calves*	*Bulls*	*Cows*	*Buffa-loes*	*Goats*	*Total*
1.	Thakur	14	37	30	15	17	167
2.	Chamar	7	32	20	6	29	94
3.	Pasi	3	33	17	5	30	88
4.	Ahir	26	25	19	15	2	87
5.	Dhobi	2	11	1	3	10	27 (with 1 donkey, 28)
6.	Kumhar	—	10	4	5	3	22
7.	Gadaria	—	7	3	1	3	14
8.	Barhai	1	6	2	2	3	14
9.	Kalwar	2	2	2	—	3	9
10.	Bhaksor	1	—	2	—	6	9
11.	Lohar	—	2	1	2	—	5
	Total	56	165	101	54	160	536+1 537

Table VII

EDUCATIONAL RECORD OF MOHANA
(1949–55)

		Class					
	Year	*I*	*II*	*III*	*IV*	*V*	*Total*
1.	1949–50	27	6	1	3	2	39
2.	1950–51	33	6	2	4	2	47
3.	1951–52	33	10	3	3	4	53
4.	1952–53	35	7	12	1	2	57
5.	1953–54	41	4	12	6	2	65
6.	1954–55	29	12	6	8	4	59

Table VIII

LITERACY RATE AMONG VARIOUS CASTES OF MOHANA (1949–55)

	Caste	1949–50	1950–51	1951–52	1952–53	1953–54	1954–55
1.	Thakur	11	10	8	11	9	9
2.	Ahir	4	8	11	9	9	8
3.	Chamar	7	9	9	8	12	12
4.	Pasi	4	5	6	11	16	14
5.	Kumhar	3	4	4	2	2	1
6.	Dhobi	3	3	3	5	6	4
7.	Barhai	1	1	1	1	1	1
8.	Kalwar	2	1	1	1	1	2
9.	Nai	1	2	3	3	3	3
10.	Kathik	1	1	1	1	1	—
11.	Brahmin	—	1	1	1	1	1
12.	Gadaria	2	2	5	4	4	4
	Total	39	47	53	57	65	59

2. The Social Contours

CASTE PRECEDENCE. The social organisation of Mohana is a complex cultural framework built round the traditional Hindu social system represented by the caste organisation. Though the primary unit of the village society is the family, unitary or joint, caste division determines and decides all social relations. A study of Mohana can best be made by a survey of its caste structure as it actually functions in the village. In the caste-cultural configuration, entry into a social status is a function of heredity: individual achievement, personal quality or wealth have, according to the strict traditional prescription, no say in determining the social status. But an important point that now catches a social scientist's eye in the field of investigation is the growing discrepancy between theory and practice.

The population of Mohana consists of fifteen castes, namely, Brahmin, Thakur, Ahir, Kurmi, Lohar, Barhai, Kumhar, Gadaria, Nai, Kathik, Kalwar, Pasi, Dhobi, Chamar and Bhaksor.

It is difficult to classify the fifteen castes of Mohana according to the traditional *Varna* system. But from the point of view of caste superiority, which is symbolically represented by inter-dining, acceptance of food and water, seating arrangement and manner of greeting, these fifteen castes can be grouped in a hierarchical order. It must be pointed out at the outset that this status-wise grouping is only a tentative attempt to show the position of different castes, as they view it themselves. The position of one caste *vis-a-vis* the rest is seen in the light of its day-to-day relations with them.

At the top tier in the trichotomic division of the caste hierarchy are the Brahmin and the Thakur, whose combined population of 138, divided into 25 households, accounts for 23 per cent of the total village population. Highest in the hierarchy of castes comes the Brahmin who officiates at the religious ceremonies of all the castes. He does not dine at the house of a member of any other caste.

Table IX

HIERARCHICAL GROUPING OF THE FIFTEEN CASTES

A	Brahmin		Thakur
B	Ahir		Kurmi
		Gadaria	
	Lohar		Barhai
		Kumhar	
		Nai	
		Kathik	
		Kalwar	
C	Pasi		Dhobi
		Chamar	
		Bhaksor	

When a Brahmin performs some ceremony at any house, he takes *seedha* and cooks his own food. Even from the Thakur, whose status is almost equal to his own and who are also in the top tier of the social ladder, a Brahmin accepts only raw material like flour, pulses and vegetables, and cooks the food himself. Of the three Brahmin houses (nine persons) in Mohana, Din Shukla belongs to the village, while Kishori Baba, originally from village Hardoi near Gosainganj, is domiciled here. Their traditional, learned and priestly profession and their consequent highest status in the caste and social hierarchy demand that the Brahmins lead a very strict and pious life. Even the Thakur regard the Brahmin as superior to them in status and recognise this in the seating arrangement. When sitting together, *Mukhia* Nath Singh and *Sarpanch* Naranath offer a Brahmin the *sirhana,* that is, upper end of the *charpai,*

and themselves occupy the *paintana*, the lower end. Both Thakurs and Ahirs greet them with *payar chhuna* (touching the feet) as a mark of respect. The accepted mode of co-operation in the village is *badla* (reciprocity), but Din Shukla takes help from members of any caste without having to return it in any shape. In practice, however, all respect and consideration shown to a Brahmin is conditional upon the latter leading a strictly religious life, according to the scriptures, adhering to the prescribed norms. That a deviation from these may deprive a member of the highest caste of his sanctioned status is clearly indicated in Mohana, where, because of their personal vices, the Brahmin are beginning to lose ground. One Brahmin has developed illicit relations with a Brahmin widow and is not called for any religious performance by any caste. Thakur regard the *purohit's* family as greedy and unreliable and one Thakur said at the marriage of his son the *purohit* tried to cheat him, saying that the horoscopes of his son and of the prospective bride did not tally and that it would require some expenditure to propitiate the inauspicious stars. The Thakur consulted another Brahmin of the neighbouring village who found the *janampatris* tallying perfectly, indicating that the couple would make a fine match. Again, another Brahmin, while serving in the Indian army during the Second World War, took to drinking; he gambles and often visits houses of ill-fame in Lucknow. Last winter he was seen taking a drink with a foreigner and the news spread at once in the village.

All these factors have led to a weakening of the Brahmin's traditionally-prescribed ranking in the caste hierarchy. The young among the Thakur do not recognise the superior status of the local Brahmin and call priests from other villages for their ceremonies; Kori Ahir recently invited Srihari of Kutwa to recite *Katha* at his house. The consideration shown to the *purohit* family in getting help from others without reciprocating it is now resented and often denied. Prasad Purohit complains that he has now to pay the Chamar to work the *Beri* (for irrigation) in his field.

The Thakur is the preponderating caste not only at the top tier of the caste hierarchy but in the entire village. Numerically the second largest—129 persons making 22 households—they are economically and politically the most influential group in the village.

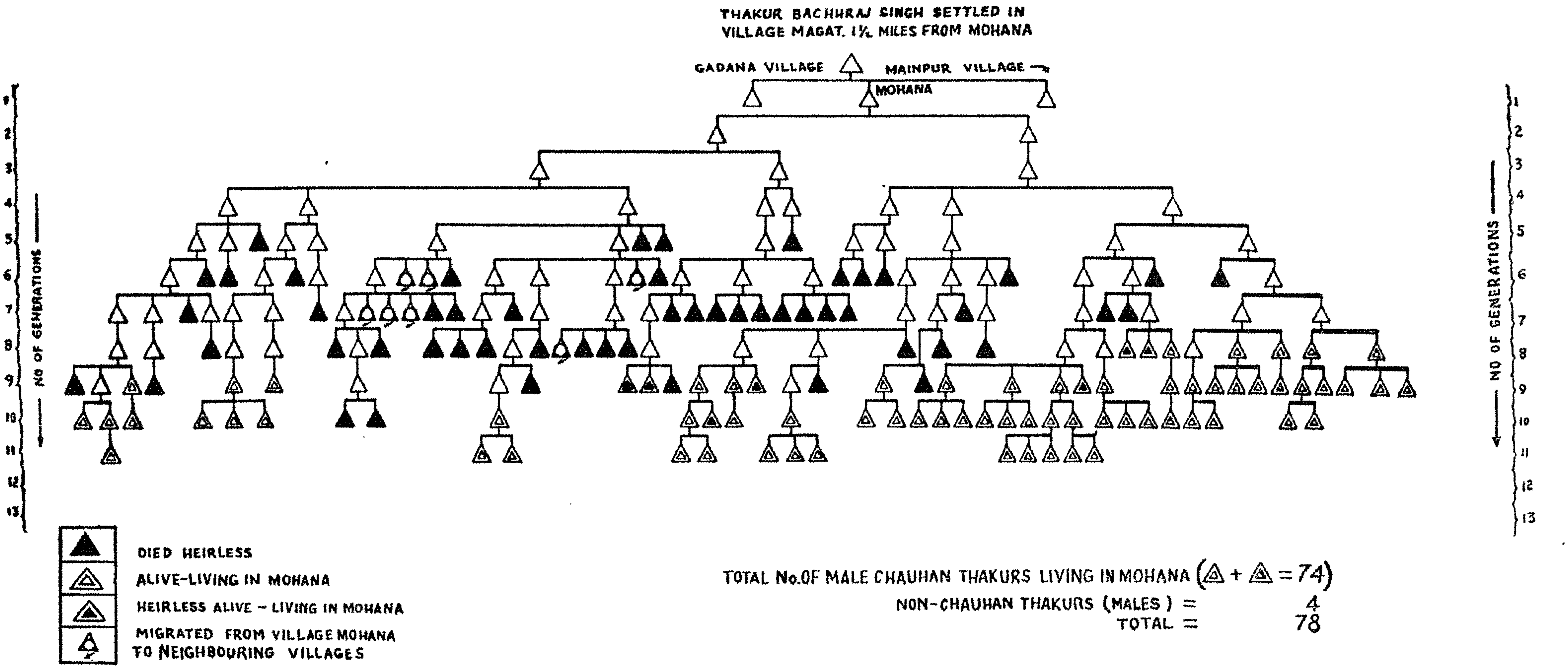
As the first settlers in the village, their ancestry covering more than nine generations, their history going back to more than 250 years, they were, till the abolition of zamindari (landlordism) in 1951, the village landlords and, following the feudalistic way then current, they were treated by other castes as the village rulers. Even though the Brahmin occupy a higher position than the Thakur on the caste ladder, yet the Thakur have enjoyed more prestige, have had greater influence and are given higher social status than any other caste. It is very likely due to the fact that in the days of the zamindari system, Thakurs were the village landlords and had practically all the other castes at their behest as *assamis* (tenants) for land cultivation, who could be evicted at will. But, following the political independence of India and the abolition of landlordism, land-tillers have acquired *Sirdari* and *Bhumidari* rights. The Thakurs have consequently lost their old hold over other castes and are losing their previous influence—and they know it.

Of 22 Thakur families, 20 are from the Chauhan group and belong to one *Khandan*. The *Khandan* is an exogamous group, consisting of several consanguine families, descended from a common male ancestor, Chauhan Thakur of Chaurai village, District Mainpuri, who came here about the end of the eighteenth century and settled down in 52 villages. Chauhans are from the 'higher' set of Thakur; other sections among the 'higher' Thakur include 'Bhadauria', who are now mostly in Bhindbadaur region between Agra and Gwalior, 'Kachhwah', now mostly settled in Bundelkhand, between Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, and the 'Rathore' Thakurs. Chauhans of Mohana are of *Bachh* gotra. Bachh Raj Singh, the second son of Chauhan Thakur of Chaurai village, District Mainpuri, having conquered 52 villages of this area, gave 12 to his second son. Thakur Bachh Raj Singh had three sons, Bhim Sen, Chandra Sen and Phursat Singh, each of whom inherited four villages. Bhim Sen went away to village Shampur, Phursat Singh to village Gadana and Chandra Sen started living at Mohana. Thakurs of these villages revive their old kinship ties at *Holi* when they assemble at Shampur to celebrate the festival. There is some dispute between Thakurs of Gadana and Shampur, each side claiming its ancestor to have been the eldest son of Thakur Bachh Raj Singh. Thakurs of Mohana side with those of Shampur,

accepting Bhim Sen as the eldest son, and join the annual celebrations there. But the Thakurs of Gadana, who deny this claim of Shampur Thakurs, do not go to Shampur and, as a token protest, abstain from the *Holi* celebrations.

Chauhans were originally an exogamous sub-caste, the wider, 'higher' Chauhan-Bhadauria-Kachhwah-Rathore group being endogamous. Now the endogamous group includes besides the four 'higher' sub-castes, Vaish, Panwar, Kathbaisa, Kalhans, Malhans and Sheobais. Thakurs of Mohana tell a long tale of how these 'inferior' sub-castes have come to be included in the endogamous group.

A long time ago, a young Chauhan girl, on a visit to her relatives at Ghatpur, attracted the attention of the local Raja, a Panwar Thakur, who fell in love with her. He forcibly took her to his palace and married her. There could not have been a greater affront to the Chauhan family; the girl's father took a vow not to put on his turban or to eat anything till he had avenged the insult, taught the Panwar Raja a lesson and got his daughter back. He went from house to house in all the 52 Chauhan villages. When people offered him food, or requested him to put on his turban, he declined to do so and said that only his caste brethren could 'help him tie his turban', meaning that it was now for his caste to restore the Chauhan honour, of which their turban was a symbol. All the male Thakurs, between twenty and fifty years of age, are reported to have assembled in Ghazipur jungle, deciding to proceed to Ghatpur, behead the Panwar Raja, bring back the Chauhan girl and restore the caste prestige. But as they were about to start from their houses, the girl's mother is said to have posed them a problem. She said she did not want to stand in their way as the prestige of the caste was as dear to her as to them, if not more, but they must first clear one of her doubts: the marriage of her daughter to a Panwar Thakur, even though against the caste regulations, was complete. Killing the Raja would mean her daughter becoming a widow. Would anyone from the 'higher' Thakurs accept a widow's hand in marriage? Since it is not proper to keep a young widow in the family, the girl's mother wanted this point to be clarified before the Thakur men set out for Ghatpur to kill the Raja. This certainly was a problem. No one from the 'higher' Thakurs would volunteer to


THAKUR BACHHRAJ SINGH SETTLED IN
VILLAGE MAGAT. 1½ MILES FROM MOHANA
GADANA VILLAGE
MAINPUR VILLAGE
MOHANA
NO OF GENERATIONS
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
DIED HEIRLESS
ALIVE-LIVING IN MOHANA
HEIRLESS ALIVE – LIVING IN MOHANA
MIGRATED FROM VILLAGE MOHANA
TO NEIGHBOURING VILLAGES
TOTAL No.OF MALE CHAUHAN THAKURS LIVING IN MOHANA (△ + △ = 74)
NON-CHAUHAN THAKURS (MALES) = 4
TOTAL = 78

marry a widow. When no other solution could be thought of, the elders among them suggested that, instead of killing the Panwar Raja of Ghatpur, they should invite him and regularise the marriage according to the Chauhan marriage rites. This was ultimately done. And since then Chauhans have started marrying not only among Panwar Thakur, but also among Bais, Kathbaisa, Kalhans, Malhans and Sheobais.

Personal jealousies and intra-caste rivalries often result in open flare-ups, but in cases where the interests of the entire caste were at stake, the Thakurs have, in the past, tended to unite. Since the abolition of zamindari two diverse tendencies have been observed: on the one hand, with their decline in economic power and social influence, some Thakurs in the village have been trying to form an inter-village axis to make up for the loss, while, on the other hand, intra-caste rivalries in the village have started becoming more acute.

However, other castes still go to the Thakurs seeking help to settle their disputes. Chamar, Pasi and other castes at the lower rung of the caste hierarchy look to them as arbitrators in cases of conflict among themselves. Even the Brahmin, who are traditionally higher than the Thakur in order of precedence, seek their help: when the *Purohit* Prasad's wife beat her father-in-law, Pandit Din Shukla, with a *chimta* (iron tongs) and turned him out of the house, the latter sought Baran Singh's help, requesting that the Panchayat should be summoned to look into this shameful behaviour of his daughter-in-law. Ahirs are the only exceptions who do not give much thought to Thakurs' authority. Ahirs do not like to consider themselves inferior to Thakur, and are an important group in neutralizing the latter's influence. They have assured the non-resident zamindar of the village of their help in case the Thakur did any mischief to him, and even though zamindari has been abolished now, the former zamindar wields much influence in the village.

When the Thakur were the village zamindars, they had all their cultivation work done by their *assamis* (tenants), but now they have to do it themselves. Still, much of their land is taken by other castes, who work on *batai* (crop-sharing) basis. Besides, they are the local money-lenders, having a virtual monopoly which they do not hesitate to use to their advantage. With the abolition of the zamindari system and the land-tiller acquiring *Bhumidari* or

Sirdari rights, Thakur have lost their old hold and influence. Jodh Singh believes that other castes do not treat the Thakur with the same respect as they did in olden days. The decline in the old authority and status is inducing mixed reactions among them. In desperate efforts to hold on against the 'lower' castes rising up against them, some Thakur have started forming smaller groups, which often are up against each other, while some are trying to align with Thakurs of neighbouring villages, making a cross-axis bid to get together and retain whatever is possible of the old hold over other castes.

In the intermediate tier of the village social structure are Ahir, Barhai, Gadaria, Kurmi, Kumhar, Kathik, Kalwar, Lohar and Nai, who together constitute 28.5% of the village population; they are in all 38 families of 173 persons. All these nine castes, though at the intermediate level of the village caste and social hierarchy, do not stand on equal footing with one another. From the point of view of precedence, Ahir and Kurmi occupy a higher status than Gadaria, and all these three are regarded superior to Lohar, Barhai and Kumhar. Though the latter three form the artisan group, Kumhar's status is considered lower than that of Lohar and Barhai. Nai is *praja* to all these castes and next to them come Kathik and Kalwar.

The 18 Ahir families, having 65 persons, live in a separate *mohalla* (locality), named Ahiran Tola after the caste. This is a somewhat exclusive group in the village. Ahirs are traditionally cattle herders. They domesticate cows and buffaloes, sell milk and prepare *ghee* and *khoa*. Since, however, most of the milk is exported to Lucknow, *ghee* and *khoa* are not prepared on a large scale. Even though selling milk and milk products has been their caste occupation, Ahirs of this village do not have a sufficient number of cattle to meet their requirements. They have, therefore, taken to agriculture as their second profession. Since few of them have their own land to cultivate, they take land from Thakurs or from the former zamindar, on *pot* or *batai* basis. Kori Ahir prefers payment of *pot* (agricultural tax), which he regards as better than *batai* (crop-sharing) in which one has to part with half the yield. Though the Thakur are superior in caste status to the Ahir, the latter resent being considered inferior, and have been making efforts to raise their

status. They wear *kanthi*, given to them by their *Guru* (Preceptor) and call themselves *Bhagats* ; they are vegetarians and do not accept *kachcha* food from anyone, not even from the Thakur. A Thakur can take water from the hands of an Ahir, but an Ahir would not take water in a pot that has been touched by a Thakur, much less accept water from him.

The continual existence of ill feeling between these two groups causes many quarrels. In the quarrel between Bir Singh and Dr. M. over the mango grove, the Ahir have always backed Dr. M. There is animosity between the Thakur of Mohana and the Ahir of Purwas too. Hardly any year passes without a quarrel between them. In the mango grove case these Ahir also supported the claim of Dr. M. Conflicts between the Thakur and the Ahir are many and longstanding. About 11 years ago, Sukhan Ahir of Balapur stole the mustard crop of Nath Singh. Nath held his watchman Kalidin Pasi responsible for the loss. Sukhan was not an expert thief for he had dropped leaves and sticks of the mustard plant on the way. Kalidin Pasi, following the trail, reached the field of Sukhan, where Sukhan was reaping his mustard crop rapidly, with the idea of mixing the stolen crop with his own. The watchman ran back to Mohana and informed Nath of the culprit. Nath set out for Balapur with Jodh Singh and Baran Singh. On interrogation Sukhan pleaded ignorance of the theft, but after threats and abuses he admitted his guilt and, apologising, returned Nath's crop to him.

Lack of unity among the Thakurs of Mohana has emboldened the Ahir. About seven years ago when Jodh Singh was the *Ziledar* the Ahir of the Purwas committed many thefts in Mohana. Once Kulsi Ahir stole fodder from the field of Thakur Baksh Singh. A few months later Bhola Ahir made away with a large quantity of gram plants from the field of Doobar Dhobi. The next evening still another Ahir was found stealing gram plants from Ghum Dhobi's field. Ghum caught the culprit, but being advanced in age, could not retain him. The thief beat Ghum and ran away with the gram plants. Jodh Singh swore to take revenge for these thefts. He had to wait till the next year, when the Ahirs stole crops again. Jodh Singh organised a squad consisting of Baksh Singh Naik, Dev Singh, Jadhav Singh, Sitai Pasi, Nandan Pasi, Sadi Pasi,

Parsadhi Dhobi, Janga Kurmi, Sukhan Chamar and Chotan Ahir. At about 8 o'clock on a moonlit night, these people went armed with *lathis* and *ballams* to Abalapur. They spent four hours cutting down the 'Arhar' crop of Kulsi Ahir, and wheat and mustard crops of Sanju Ahir (father of Bhola). At midnight they started back taking with them as much crop as they could carry, leaving the rest lying in the fields. Bir Singh, Jodh's rival, informed Hira of the raid. Hira, along with Sukhan Ahir and Mahavir, challenged the raiding party near Mohana. Sukhan Chamar slipped unnoticed from the group and took word of this to Jodh Singh. In the mean time Sukhan Ahir, when asked by Baksh, said that the crops belonged to Sanju Ahir. It so happened that Sukhan and Sanju were not on friendly terms at the time, so Sukhan Ahir was quite willing to allow the raiding party to pass. Baksh Singh offered a part of the loot to Hira, who accepted it at first, but on second thoughts declined it saying that he would be placed in an awkward position in the morning, when Sanju Ahir discovered the theft; just then Jodh Singh reached the spot with his pistol and challenged Hira, but the latter was not inclined to fight, and so the people of Mohana went away with the loot. In the morning Kulsi found that he too was one of the victims of the previous night's raid. Collecting a few Ahirs, he went to Mohana, where he met Jodh Singh and told him that he would take his revenge soon. Jodh Singh replied by threatening Kulsi with his pistol, and said that if he advanced another step, he would be a dead man. Nath Singh and Madunath Singh, who were present there, persuaded the men to go back.

Kulsi was played out in another case of theft also. One day Rampal Singh of Mohana saw Kulsi cutting grass from the field of Dr. M. Rampal Singh and his cousin Dukharan also had gone there with the idea of stealing grass from someone's field. Rampal Singh invited Kulsi for a smoke. When Kulsi went back to Dr. M.'s field he found all the grass that he had cut missing, for Dukharan had carried it off while Rampal had detained Kulsi. There is no need to say that it was pre-arranged. Kulsi, himself a thief, could not complain about it to anyone.

The Thakur do not now enjoy the same economic influence which they had before the zamindari abolition, but the Ahir,

having taken to agriculture, are very well off. Thakur Naktu Singh has even had to take up a job under Bhugai Ahir of Lohangpur. These economic changes have widened the rift between the Thakur and the Ahir. Much against their will, the Thakur are sometimes forced to respect the Ahir; for instance, when an Ahir visits a Thakur (which is very rare), if the Ahir is an elderly man he is offered a cot and the Ahir also sits on it, and not on the ground as the other caste people do.

The Ahir are held in such contempt by the Thakur that the latter relate many stories to show that the former are fools. One such story is that during a harvest an Ahir family sat down to prepare the food budget for the following year (i.e. up to the next harvest). According to their calculations they ran short of food for one day. They decided to live on husk and chaff on that day, and assigned the next day for this purpose for the ordeal to be over soon. So on the day after harvest they ate husk and chaff. There was no second day for them as the whole family died due to eating the husk and chaff, leaving behind the whole year's food supply.

Here is a story about an Ahir being cheated by a barber. The Ahir set out for his father-in-law's place to fetch his wife. This was his first visit to their house after the marriage. To show off his status he took with him a Nai as his servant. They had only one horse between them. It was agreed that the barber would ride the horse when they passed through any village, and the Ahir would ride it the rest of the way. When they neared their destination it was obviously the Nai's turn to ride. He went off on the horse's back to inform the Ahir's father-in-law of his son-in-law's visit, but when he reached the house he changed his mind and himself posing as the son-in-law told them at the house that he had come to fetch his wife and that his servant was following him on foot. Thus by his cleverness he went away with the Ahir's wife and his horse, claiming both as his own. It was only at the intervention of a Thakur that the Ahir got his wife and horse back.

There are also common sayings ridiculing the Ahir: such as "one ought to make friends with an Ahir only after all the other communities have perished", and "an Ahir's friendship is like the shade of a *Babul* tree. You enjoy it for one minute and the next minute it

disappears". The Ahir retaliate by relating ridiculous stories about the Thakur, one of which is that there was a very hot-tempered Thakur, who, to make matters worse was fond of his irascible temper. He was once sitting near a fire, when a fly entered his nose. For some time he held his breath to get the fly out, but it was of no avail. He decided to teach the fly a lesson, so he thrust his head into the fire and died of burns. Later the Thakur's son proudly narrated the incident to everyone, concluding it triumphantly by asserting that though his father died, the fly had 'learnt its lesson'.

The Kurmi caste is an exclusively agriculturist group and the only Kurmi in the village is treated with respect by all castes. Thakurs treat the Kurmi on a more or less equal footing with themselves; and, unlike other lower castes, Kurmis do not work in a Thakur's house.

The four Gadaria families in the village account for 12 persons. These families do not constitute any separate *Tola*: their two houses are in the Ahiran *Tola* and two in Pasian *Tola*. Their traditional caste occupation is herding sheep and goats. People of this caste used to make rough-quality rugs and other woolen articles. But now no Gadaria in the village has any sheep and, therefore, there is no question of any wool business. Though they still have a few goats, of late, members of other castes have also started keeping goats. Gadarias have now taken to agriculture. They own all the land they cultivate. Gadaria is considered to be a 'clean' caste. Its members accept only *pakka* food from Thakurs, and the latter also can take *pakka* food from them.

Of the three artisan groups, Barhai (3 families, 15 members) and Lohar (one family, 10 persons) occupy a status distinctly superior to that of the Kumhar (5 families, 38 persons), as is evidenced from their relations with other castes, both higher and lower. Thakurs may accept *pakka* food from a Barhai and a Lohar, but not from a Kumhar. It is only very recently that Thakurs have started accepting water at the hands of a Kumhar. A Nai, again, does not take *kachcha* food from a Kumhar, while he takes it from a Barhai and a Lohar.

The three Barhai (carpenter) houses do not constitute any separate *mohalla*. Their caste occupation is *Barhaigiri* (carpentry), which they now find insufficient for their maintenance. They

still repair agricultural implements, the doors of houses, wooden cots, etc. but there is very little demand for their work and the profession has become unremunerative. The demand for their work has further decreased now that villagers have started purchasing their bullock carts, the house-doors and other wooden articles from the city market. They have, therefore, been turning to agriculture, keeping *Barhaigiri* as their subsidiary profession.

There is only one Lohar house in the village. *Lohari* (blacksmithy) is their traditional profession. Parag Lohar makes agricultural implements for the local requirements, which include such instruments as *Phar, Gandasa, Khurpa, Balam, Kata* and the plough blades. He can make other, better types of implements, too, but finds no local demand for them. Being the only Lohar in the village, his services are required by every caste, which makes him a sort of central figure. Sometimes people from other villages also bring him work, but *Lohari* alone does not suffice for the requirements of his family and this has turned him to agriculture, reducing the ancestral calling to a supplementary role.

All the five Kumhar (potter) houses are in the Pasian *Tola*. During zamindari days they were provided with land for housing by the then Thakur zamindars, since they were then considered *assamis* of the Thakur. They had taken agricultural land from Thakurs on *pot* or *batai* basis; but after the abolition of zamindari, these *assamis* have become Sirdars or Bhumidars and now pay *lagan* directly to the government. The traditional occupation of Kumhar, *Kumhari* includes the making of clay pots like *ghara, nand, kulhar, chilam,* etc. But now except for one house, all have given up their caste work and have taken to agriculture. Udai Kumhar says that *Kumhari* does not fetch enough for their needs as there is not much demand for earthenware in the village, and they do not export their wares. Hira Kumhar's is the only house left which still carries on the hereditary profession and is today the sole supplier of earthenware in the village.

As all the artisan groups, Barhai, Lohar and Kumhar, find their traditional work unremunerative, they have had, of necessity, to take to agriculture, retaining the caste-calling only as supplementary to the main occupation.

Other castes at this, the intermediate, level are: Nai (barber),

Kathik (professional dancers) and Kalwar (bania). The Nai (three families, 19 persons) whose ancestral occupation is hair-cutting, have an important position in the caste order and have *jajmani* of all the castes except Chamars and Bhaksors; their clientele extends to the neighbouring villages of Amarpur, Balak and the *purwas* of Balapur and Lalpur. The Nain (wife of the barber) does various types of work at the time of ceremonies and festivals and serves members of different castes. The Nai is required at practically every ceremonial occasion in the family: whether it be *mundan* or marriage, birth or death, *chatti* or *barhi*, Nai or Nain has—often both have—some work.

The only Kathik family in the village has come a few years back and has no definite position on the caste map. Kathik, who are professional dancers, join marriage parties and other ceremonies and festivals as drum beaters, musicians and dancers.

The Kalwar (two families, 13 persons) are considered lower in status than all the other castes at the intermediate level. Till recently, no member of other castes at this level would accept even water from a Kalwar. Sometimes even a Pasi, who comes at the lower rungs of the village social and caste hierarchy, will not accept water at the hands of a Kalwar.

There is a Kalwar family, in this village, that of Kushehar Kalwar, which is always in trouble with the Thakur.

Once Kushehar Kalwar and his brother-in-law Sunder Lal were going to Lucknow. Before they left the village they met Maharaj Singh, who joked with Kushehar over some matter. Kushehar was unable to give a witty reply, so Sunder Lal abused Maharaj Singh in very vulgar language. The Thakur smarting under the insult tried to beat them, but they ran away. Bent on taking revenge he remained in that place till evening, but the two Kalwars did not yet return. However his resolution to beat Sunder Lal was not weakened, though the action had to be postponed. He informed the other Thakurs of the incident and bided his time to wreak vengeance. Kushehar and Sunder returned in the night and the latter was informed of Maharaj Singh's ire against him. This terrified both Kushehar and Sunder Lal, so they approached Nath Singh for help. Sunder Lal's mother sought help from Baran Singh. Though Maharaj Singh was still burning with rage, he was

pacified by the intervention of Nath Singh and Baran Singh.

Once when Kushehar Kalwar was having his bath at the well in 'Kothar' (the quarters for Dr. M.'s servants), Jagtana, Jadhav Singh's sister, happened to pass that way. Kushehar, prompted by evil designs, threw water on her, thereby wetting her *dhoti*. Jagtana wished to go away quickly and Kushehar tried to catch her. Sitai Chamar was watching all this from a field, and he immediately reported the matter to Jadhav. That night Jadhav softly crept out of his house and made his way to Kushehar's melon fields, where he knew Kushehar would be sleeping. There he gave a sound thrashing to Kushehar with his *lathi*. Kushehar was badly wounded. The next morning he reported the matter to Nath, father of Jadhav. Nath was ignorant of the whole affair till then. He now wanted to teach his son a lesson, but Jadhav could not be found anywhere in the village. A few days later Jadhav made his appearance, and explained to his father why he had so beat Kushehar.

Kushehar has a shop, and one day when Jadhav passed that way, he saw Kushehar standing there with his hands on the shoulders of Satrohan's sister. When Jadhav questioned him as to what he was doing, he replied that he was handing Rajana (Satrohan's sister) the goods she had bought. This angered Jadhav who got ready to beat Kushehar, but others intervened and prevented him from doing so. Kushehar was severely warned by the Thakur that if he carried on in this way with Thakur girls he would be kicked out of the village. Kushehar apologised to the Thakur.

Otherwise Thakurs and Kalwars get on well with each other.

Pasi, Dhobi, Chamar and Bhaksor—59 families, 292 persons—constitute the lowest rung of the caste hierarchy in Mohana. Of these four castes, Pasi and Dhobi occupy a higher status than the Chamar, while the Bhaksor is considered to be inferior to the latter.

Pasis (21 families, 111 persons) form 18.5% of the lower castes, who in all constitute 48.6% of the village population. Except two families, which live in Ahiran *Tola*, all the Pasi families live in a separate *mohalla* called, after the caste, the Pasian *Tola*. It is a mixed *mohalla* having houses of Kumhar, Gadaria and Lohar. These castes are superior to Pasi in caste status, but perhaps because of their numerical preponderance, Pasi generally have a dominant

hold in this *Tola.* Yet quarrels often arise, as, according to Din Pasi, the higher caste people try to harass, and take unfair advantage of them. Pasis of this village belong to one *khandan*, which has gradually split into separate families. Traditionally, their occupation was tapping toddy and rearing pigs, but now no Pasi in this village does either of these. Pasis, as a group, are known for their reliability and trustworthiness; in the past they were employed for sending confidential messages from one place to another and they worked as watchmen. They are the *gorait* (servants) of Thakur and perform every kind of work for their masters. If a Thakur happens to be away from the village and, by chance, there is no grown-up male member in the house, the *gorait* will sleep there at night and otherwise look after the place. When a Thakur goes out to attend any marriage, feast or any other ceremony in any other village, his *gorait* usually accompanies him.

There is some difference of opinion in the village over the relative status of the Pasi and the Dhobi. The Pasi regard the Dhobi as inferior to them as the latter wash the clothes of all castes, including those of the Chamar and the Bhaksor. They also wash *utahiah* (dirty clothes of the woman) at the birth of a child. The Pasi engage the Dhobi for washing their clothes and give them *tohai* of six *panseri* (*kachchi*) of grain annually, but they themselves do not perform any work for the Dhobi, nor do they accept any food, or even water, from them.

The Dhobi (seven families, 34 persons), on the other hand, consider themselves superior to Pasi because the latter used to herd pigs—and also because of the attitude of other castes, especially the Thakur, towards them—and even though the Pasi of Mohana have given up this work, their caste-men in other villages still do it. While the Pasi are the *gorait* of Thakur, the Dhobi are not. The Dhobi's main work still is washing clothes. From his *jajman* (regular customer) a Dhobi gets payment in kind, twice a year, and from the casual customers, from 6 to 12 nP per piece. He also brings clothes for washing from Lucknow.

The Chamar (29 families, 141 persons) are considered to belong to a very low level in the village caste hierarchy ; they are inferior to all the other castes, except the Bhaksor. They do all sorts of work as labourers such as repairing houses and cutting wood for fuel, getting

about 50 nP a day or, if on monthly basis, which is not very common, about fifteen rupees a month. Some of them have also taken to agriculture, doing it on *batai* and *pot* basis. Four Chamar families have specialised in skinning. This group is known as Gausai. They skin the dead animals, like cows, buffaloes, and bulls, and sell the skin. This is a more paying work than that of a labourer and a Gausai makes about three to four hundred rupees a year. But other Chamars treat the Gausai as inferior to them and do not marry among this group. Gausai Chamar help the police authorities in removing dead bodies from the village to the police station for investigation or to Lucknow for post-mortem. They are paid for this work.

On the lowest rung of the trichotomic division of the village caste and social ladder come the Bhaksor (two families, six persons). Even the Chamar consider them as their *praja*. This is the only caste in the village, which solely sticks to its traditional occupation of making baskets, *beri* (for irrigational purposes), and *soop* from bamboo, reeds and grass. These products find a ready market in the village. The Bhaksor have nothing to do with agriculture—the only instance in Mohana where a caste has not taken to agriculture even for a supplementary income. They, however, are musicians also and their band-party is in great demand on festival and other occasions. Their musical instruments include *dholak* (tom-tom), drum and *nagada*.

With the exception of Brahmin, Ahir and Kurmi, all the castes offer higher seats to the Thakur, and they themselves take a lower seat or do not sit at all. Members of these castes, though they can reprimand a Thakur boy, dare not beat him under any circumstances. But Thakur boys can and do beat boys of the low castes.

3. Inter-caste Relations

THAT CASTE is the prescriber and traditional regulator of social relations in India is the commonplace theoretical tenet with which as background any and every field investigator starts his study. Caste provides codes of conduct and deviations from these are not generally tolerated. The system has a stronger hold in the rural areas than in the cities. For a first-hand account of the exact nature and extent of the hold of caste in determining the codes of conduct, how far the centuries-old codes actually control the day to day modes of behaviour, whether or not there are differences between the accumulated tradition and common practice, if so, of what nature and to what extent, and if not, how tradition makes allowance for the various types of changed conditions, like physical necessity, altered economic relationships, new legal prescriptions and changing political set-up—for all these, some idea of the social relations in the context of the actual cultural milieu is essential. Since, as is the tentative hypothesis, caste still holds sway in the Indian rural social set-up, a picture of the inter-caste relations in the actual village matrix should throw some considerable light on this aspect.

In the first instance, attention is focussed on how the various castes behave and react towards the Thakur, which caste community has been the dominant group in the village ever since its inception. The dominance of the Thakur group has now begun to be shaken up, ever since the legal removal of its economic pillar, the zamindari system, which was the strong medium through which it held the various other castes in a position of economic subordination, wrongly interpreted as *integration*. Thakurs, even though they are no more the village landlords and in no position to offer patronage to other castes by way of awarding any free-of-tax land, are still the most influential group in the village. With their wide money-lending business, they still are a powerful group.

Birth of a baby. At the birth of a Thakur child the Brahmin is

called to note the time of birth and prepare the *Janampatri* (horoscope) of the child; he also decides the most auspicious date and time for *Chatti*, the sixth-day-after-the-birth ceremony, and *Barha*, the twelfth-day-after-the-birth ceremony. In return, the Brahmin gets the *Neg* (payment) of one rupee if a boy is born, and 50 nP if a girl is born. When Ram Pal Singh's son was born, last year, Thakur Din Shukla was called upon to prepare the *Janampatri* and to decide the auspicious days for *Chatti* and *Barha* ceremonies. Thakur Din Shukla accepted the customary *Neg* but did not dine at Ram Pal Singh's house on either occasion. The Ahir do not attend childbirth, *Chatti* or *Barha* ceremonies of the Thakurs. The Kurmis also do not participate in the birth ceremony of a Thakur child, but attend the feasts given on *Chatti* and *Barha*. The Kurmi accept only *pakka* food (cooked in *ghee*) from the Thakurs. Junga Kurmi of Mohana accepts both *kachcha* and *pakka* food from the Thakur. He is an old man, and the sole survivor of the only Kurmi family in the village. Once he fell very ill and, of necessity, had to accept whatever food he could get from the village. But the Kurmi of other villages, says Junga Kurmi, do not accept *kachcha* food from the Thakur.

In the zamindari days the Lohar used to supply the *choora* or *kara* (bangles made of iron), *kajrauta* (a small iron case to keep the *kajal* or lamp black) and a knife at the birth of a Thakur child. In return, he was given from two and a half to five seers of grain and was also awarded some *Jagir* (a piece of free land) by the Thakur. When Jadhav was born, Parag Lohar went with the customary things, and Jadhav's father, Thakur Nath Singh Mukhia, gave away 2 *biswas* of land to Parag to cultivate, free of tax payment. But now the Lohar supplies these only at the birth of the first child in a Thakur family. At the birth of Ram Pal Singh's third child, Parag did not supply anything. Lohar may attend both the *kachcha* and *pakka* feasts on *Chatti* and *Barha*. Kumhar do not go at the birth of a child in a Thakur's family, as there is no work for the Kumhar on this occasion. But on *Chatti* and *Barha*, they attend the feast, if invited by the Thakur. The Kumhar, being lower in the caste hierarchy, do not sit with the Thakur in the same line, but at a little distance away from the Thakur.

Both the Nai and the Nain have a lot of work to do at the birth

of a Thakur child. The Nain attends to the expectant mother during confinement, and, after childbirth, from *Chatti* to *Barha*, she massages the body of the mother with *til* or mustard oil. She also applies *ubtan* (consisting of wheat flour, *haldi* [turmeric] and mustard oil), which is used instead of soap in the village, on the body of the mother and child at the ceremonial bath on *Chatti*. The Nain also plasters the floor of the house with cowdung and yellow clay and the walls with *chikni mitti* and cleans the *Saur* (place where the child is born). In return for all this work, the Nain gets four *panseri* (*kachchi*) or eight seers of grain at the birth of a boy and three *panseri* or six seers of grain at the birth of a girl. Bhagwati Nai's wife served at the birth of Thakur Ram Pal Singh's child. In return for her work, she got eight seers of grain. Some months back a girl was born in Thakur Ram Pal Singh's house. The Nain in attendance received seven and a half seers of grain. The Nain also helps in cooking food at a *Pakki* feast. Bhagwati Nai's wife cooked the food for the *pakki dawat* at Thakur Ram Pal Singh's place. The Nai acts as a messenger and invites all the relatives and friends to the feast. At a *pakki dawat* he (Nai) serves *poories* and vegetables as well as water to the guests. He also helps in washing the hands of the guests before and after the feast.

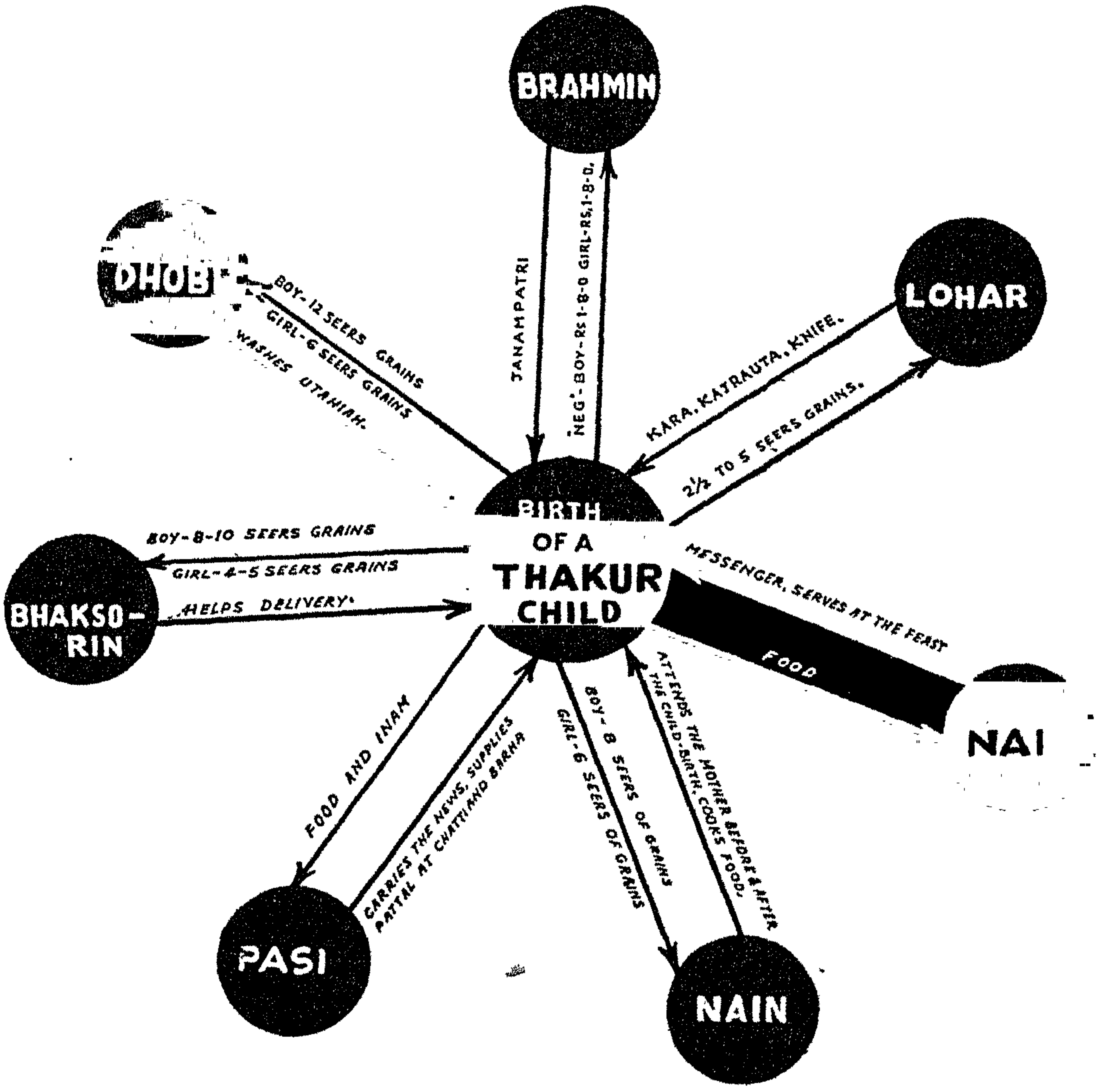
The Pasi are called at the birth of a Thakur child to carry the news and are provided with food. They also supply the *Pattal* (leaf-plates) on *Chatti* and *Barha* and are given food on these occasions. They demand gift or *neg*, which is given according to the status of the Thakur. The gift includes a *dhoti*, ready-made shirt, utensils and money. In the zamindari days they were also given *jagirs*, but not so now—very probably because there is no land to spare.

The Dhobi do the same kind of work for all the castes at the birth of a child. The clothes of the mother and the child from birth to the last *nahan* (bath) are washed by the Dhobi. These dirty clothes are given him for washing at different intervals. All the clothes from the birth of a child to the last *nahan* are termed as *utahiah*. A Dhobi is given six *panseri* of coarse grain at the birth of a male child and three *panseri* at the birth of a female child.

The Bhaksorin (Bhaksor's wife) is called at the birth of a child to help in delivery. She cuts the umbilical cord and cleans the dirty

clothes after childbirth. She massages the mother for four or five days after childbirth, and till the Nain takes over. She also gives the first *nahan* (bath) to the mother. She is given four to five *panseri* (i.e. from eight to ten seers) of coarse grain and food on the birth of a boy and half this much of grain if a girl is born. After the fifth day she has no work to do, but is provided with food on *Chatti* and *Barha.*

Sociogram No. I shows at a glance which castes are affected, and in what way, by the birth of a child in a Thakur's house. In



SOCIOGRAM No. I

Pattern of inter-caste relations on the birth of a Thakur child

each case the relations reflect mutuality, each caste performing its role and getting the reward, which in many cases is in the shape of grain, the quantity varying from caste to caste, depending upon the nature of work performed. It may be seen that at the birth of a Thakur child, seven castes, one from the top tier of the social hierarchy, three from the intermediate, and three from the lower, have direct roles to perform.

Mundan. The Brahmin decides the auspicious day for *Mundan* (the ceremonial first hair-shaving for a child). He decides the hour for the ceremony. The Nai cuts the hair of the child while the Brahmin recites Sanskrit *slokas* invoking the gods to bless the child with a long happy life. The Brahmin gets the *neg* of Rs. 1.25 for reciting the *slokas*. He also participates in the *Mundan* feast, in the sense he is given all the ingredients of the food which he cooks himself and has at the Thakur's place. After the hair is cut, he takes a *loi* (ball) of kneaded flour and applies it to the child's shaven head. This is known as *loi-pherna* and the Brahmin gets the *neg* of Rs. 1.25 for this too. Generally, Thakur Din Shukla goes to the *Mundan* at a Thakur's place. He was asked to perform the *Mundan* ceremony at the birth of Thakur Ram Pal Singh's son and received in all Rs. 2.50 as *neg*. The Ahir do not participate in the *Mundan* ceremony at a Thakur's place. They may, however, attend the *pakki dawat* if invited by the Thakur.

The Kurmi attend the *Mundan* ceremony if invited by the Thakurs. They accept only *pakka* food from the Thakur.

The Lohar bring *akhat* (grain) as gift at the *Mundan* ceremony and, in return, get 5 *batashas* (small sugar cakes). They also attend the feast on this occasion, if invited. At the *Mundan* ceremony of Dukh Haran Singh, son of Nath Singh Mukhia, Parag Lohar brought the present of *akhat* for Nath Singh. In return he got the *prashad* of five *batashas*. He also attended the feast on this occasion.

The Kumhar supply *kulhars* (clay tumblers) and other earthen pots for *Mundan* and get in return some grain, the quantity of which is not fixed but depends on the amount of earthenware they supply. They also participate in the feast. In the zamindari days the Kumhar used to get *chinh* (gift) in the form of clothes and utensils at the *Mundan* of the first male child in the Thakur

family. Now, of course, it has become impossible for any one in the village to give such gifts. At the *Mundan* ceremony of his eldest son Bindra, Thakur Nath Singh had given the *chinh* of five clothes—a *kurta, dhoti, saluka, angochcha* and a *topi*—as well as a *lota* and glass to Prabhu Kumhar. But now, after the abolition of zamindari and the resulting economic stringency among them, it has become impossible for the Thakur to be lavish in giving such presents on any occasion.

On *Mundan* the Nai cuts the hair of the child and gets a *neg* of Re. 1 to Rs. 1.50 and food for both times. The Nai and the Nain do practically the same kind of work as on *Chatti*. If there is a *pakki dawat* on this occasion, the Nain helps in preparing the food and the Nai serves water at the feast. He cannot serve water at a *kachchi dawat* (where food consisting of *roti* and *dal,* not cooked in *ghee,* is served). Gajraj Nai cut the hair of Ram Pal Singh's child at *Mundan.*

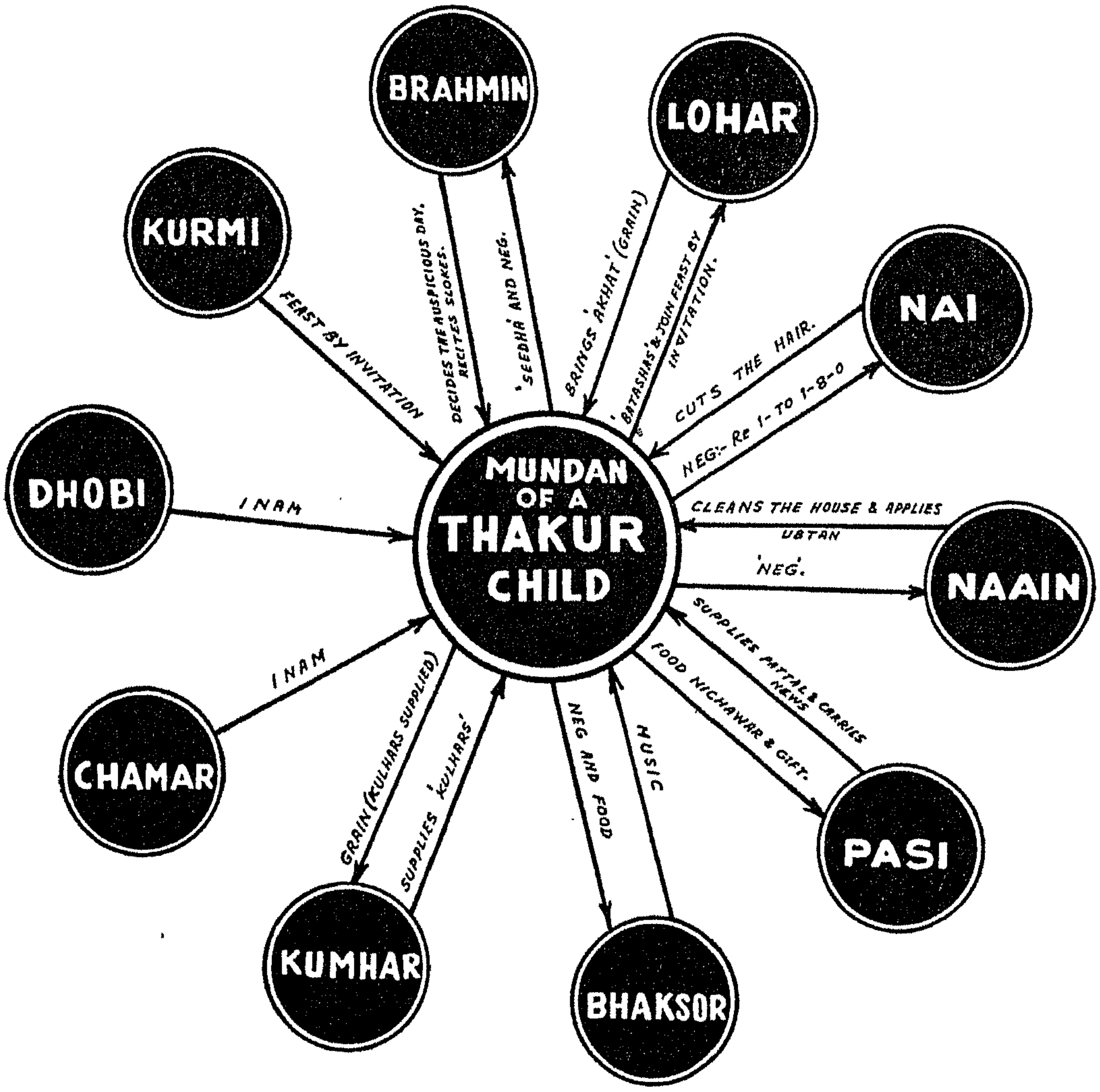
The Pasi are called to carry the invitations to other villages if there is a feast on the occasion of *Mundan.* They supply the *pattals* for the feast and in return get food as well as *nichchawar* (money) and some gift. The Pasi have their food after the Thakur and other high-caste people have had theirs. Mhedha, Shiv Charan, Kali Din, Lootoo, Jai Karan, and Diwan are the Pasis who are generally asked to carry the invitations on behalf of the Thakurs of this village. In return for their work, they receive some reward.

The Dhobi have no specific work to do on the *Mundan* of a Thakur child. But they come and ask for their *inam* (present) and get it in the form of cash or some gift. The Dhobi are given cooked food which they take home to eat. Dhondhey, Fakiray, Nankhoo and Guru Dhobis go to their *jajman's* house on the *Mundan* ceremony and ask for the *inam.* They are given from 25 nP to one rupee and some *pakka* food (*poories, kachauries, saag, raita,* etc.) to take home to eat.

The Chamar too have no work to perform on *Mundan.* They come for *inam* only and may be given food along with it. Only those Chamar who are employed by the Thakur as their servants go to the Thakur's houses for the *inam.* Makhana, Kallu and Gokaran, who work for Baran Singh, Jodh Singh and Bir Singh respectively, go for their *inam* on *Mundan* to their masters' houses.

The Bhaksor also have no particular work on *Mundan*, but when the ceremony is performed on a large scale with musical performances, the Bhaksor bring their *bajas* (musical instruments) and give a music recital. They are given wages as well as food for the day. Sewak and Mulabeg Bhaksor brought their musical instruments for the *Mundan* ceremony of Ram Narain, eldest son of Jodh Singh. They were given Rs. 1.50 as well as food for their music performance.

Sociogram No. 2 gives an idea of the different castes involved in the *Mundan* of a Thakur child. Nine castes are involved in this pattern.



SOCIOGRAM NO. 2

Pattern of inter-caste relations at the *Mundan* of a Thakur child

Marriage. At Thakur marriages, the Brahmin perform the ceremonies of *lagan* when the bride's father sends presents of clothes, ornaments and cash as well as *narial* (coconut) and *supari* (betelnuts), etc., to the bridegroom. The Brahmin performs the religious ceremony of *chawkpurna.* He draws a square, which has religious significance, on the ground with dry wheat flour. All the presents are kept on the square and the bridegroom sits in front of the *chawk.* The Brahmin reads some Sanskrit *slokas* from the sacred books. In order to perform the *lagan* ceremony the Brahmin comes from the bride's place. The Brahmin accompanies the marriage party to the bride's place to perform the various religious ceremonies. The Brahmin of both the sides perform the religious ceremony of *dwar-ki-char* when the marriage party visits the bride's house for the first time. But because the people of the village are poor, they generally do not take the Brahmin of their own village with the marriage party, but instead get the Brahmin of the bride's side to perform all the religious ceremonies. The Brahmin also directs the ceremony of *bhawren.* The bride and the bridegroom take seven rounds of the sacred fire. The Brahmin chants different *mantras* for the various rituals performed by the bride and bridegroom. After seven rounds he takes an oath from both the bride and bridegroom to lead a life of harmony, treating each other as equals, with love, regard and respect.

In the *neutui* ceremonies (one of the marriage ceremonies which is held in the *janwasa,* or *baithka*—i.e. the place where the marriage party stays in the bride's village) the Brahmin performs the ceremony of calling out the names of the forefathers of both the bride and bridegroom and invoking their souls to look after them.

At the *gauna* the Brahmin does not accompany the bridegroom. From *lagan* to marriage the Brahmin gets from Rs. 15 to Rs. 40 for all the ceremonies, depending upon the capacity of the Thakur to pay. Prasad Shukla accompanied the marriage party of Thakur Jadav Singh and performed all the ceremonies and rituals of marriage. For these services he received Rs. 17 in all.

The Ahir are invited to attend the marriage of a Thakur boy and girl. In the case of a girl's marriage the invitation is given for *dwar-ki-char* ceremony (when the marriage party arrives at the bride's house). The Ahir give presents in cash, i.e., from about Re. 1 to

Rs. 2 on this occasion. The invitation is quite formal due to lack of intimacy between the two castes. For this reason the Ahir rarely attend the marriages of Thakurs. But in Thakur Jodh Singh's marriage Tori Ahir's father had participated and given Rs. 2 as present because Jodh Singh was on friendly terms with Tori Ahir's father. Ahirs also attend the *pakki dawat* on this occasion. They do not, however, attend *bhat-ki-dawat* because *kachcha* food is served in this *dawat*, and Ahir do not eat *kachcha* food at a Thakur's place. When the Ahir are invited to accompany a Thakur's marriage party, they only accept the *pakka* food and if there happens to be a *kachchi dawat*, they are provided with *seedha*, i.e. flour, rice, pulses and other cooking material and they prepare their own food. In the *pakki dawat* they sit together with the Thakur in the same line.

Kurmi too are invited to attend the marriages of Thakur boys and girls. They also accompany the marriage parties of Thakur boys. Junga Kurmi said that Thakur and Kurmi sit together at the feast and there is no caste discrimination between the two at the feast. But the Thakurs contradicted his statement and said that Thakurs and Kurmis do not sit together at the feast. Junga says that cash presents are given on this occasion. If a Thakur gives one rupee as a present, the Kurmi always tries to return the double of the amount. But Junga, the only Kurmi of the village, being very poor, has never been able to give any present at all.

The Barhai supplies the *pata* and *divat* (clay oil lamp) and gets in return one *seedha*, which includes flour, pulses, salt, *ghee*, rice, etc., and 60 to 75 nP. In Thakur Gajadhar's marriage, Bal Govind Barhai supplied the *pata* and *divat*, in return for which he was given one *seedha* and 31 nP.

The Lohar also attend the marriage of both Thakur boys and girls. At a boy's marriage the Lohar are not usually invited to accompany the marriage party, but they may accompany the party if invited by the Thakur. At the marriage of a boy the Lohar brings a *kankan* (bracelet) and an arrow. The *kankan* is considered very auspicious and the bridegroom wears it round his wrist. When the party comes back, he puts these things off under the *Mandap* (the sacred thatched roof erected for the marriage ceremony). The Lohar is given *inam* in the form of cash, clothes, utensils and grain when he

brings the *kankan* and arrow for the groom. In the olden days the Lohar used to get anything from Re. 1 to Rs. 5 as *inam*. Nowadays he may be given 40 to 50 nP which he accepts without hesitation. Generally, Parag Lohar provides the *kankan* and arrow on these occasions and gets the *neg* of 50 nP.

At a girl's marriage, the Lohar brings four to six *challas* (rings) for the girl's fingers and a *kankan*, which the girl wears on the *Tel* ceremony. She puts these things off on *Bida* (departure for the groom's house). The Lohar is given the same *inam* as in the case of a boy's marriage. He gets food for six or seven days at a boy's marriage and for four days at a girl's. The Lohar does the *danpun* (alms) of 6 or 12 nP on behalf of the girl and gives it to the Brahmin. The Lohars participate in both the *kachcha* and *pakka* feasts on this occasion, if invited by the Thakur. *Byohar* is reciprocal. If the Lohar gives some money in the marriage of a Thakur, it is taken account of and returned whenever there is a marriage at the Lohar's house. The Thakur, however, does not stay at the house of the Lohar after paying the *byohar*. The Lohars invite the Thakurs to accompany their marriage party, which the latter willingly join, if they are provided with *pakka* food and sweets.

The Kumhar supply the required number of *bartans* (earthen pots) and *kulhars* at a Thakur boy's marriage. Kumhars do not accompany the marriage party, but the one who supplies the *bartans* gets food. Also he gets either cash or grain in return, according to the number of *bartans* supplied. Sometimes Kumhars get *chinh* in the form of *dhoti*, utensils and clothes. Prabhu Kumhar said that *chinh* had become very rare now as the Thakur preferred to dispose of their *praja* by paying them in cash only. Tanni Kumhar supplied the requisite clay utensils on Thakur Ram Naresh Singh's marriage. He was given in return only Rs. 1.25. They supply the same kind of *bartans* at a girl's marriage and are given food during the whole marriage period. They get the *nichchawar*, usually about two to four rupees. Prabhu Kumhar supplied the earthenware at the marriage of Phool Mati, daughter of Muneshwar Singh. He was given food for the entire marriage period and Rs. 2.50 in all.

At a Thakur's marriage, from the day of *lagan* to the completion of the marriage ceremony, both the Nai and Nain work at both the

bride's and the bridegroom's places. The Nain does all the household work, from plastering the floor with cowdung and yellow clay and the walls with *chikni mitti*, to washing the utensils, kneading the flour and any other work she might be asked to do. But the chief function of the Nain begins from the day of *Tel*, when she massages the body of the bride with oil and *ubtan* and helps her take her bath. The Nain joins in singing songs on the night of *Tel*. She also helps the women of the house in preparing the different food dishes. She may be asked to tender invitations to the women of the *biradari* living in the same village. She applies *Mahawar* to the bride's feet, and gives a glass of water to the bride when she starts from her mother's house for her husband's place. The Nai accompanies the marriage party and does all the work for them. He serves the guests, washes their clothes, draws water from the well for their bath, fills the *chillam* and attends to all other sundry work. He pays special attention to the groom. He also accompanies the bridegroom when the latter goes for the *bhawren* ceremony. He ties the corner of the bridegroom's shirt to the corner of the bride's *sari*. He helps the Brahmin in *chawk-purna*. Both the Nai and Nain remain in attendance on the bridegroom and bride respectively. The Nain brings the bride to the *mandap* and helps her to perform the various rituals. At *gauna* (the second marriage) the Nai accompanies the bridegroom to the bride's place and looks after him. The poor, however, do not engage him for the *gauna* ceremony due to financial considerations.

In return for his work in a Thakur's marriage, the Nai gets the *nichchawar* according to the means of the family. He also gets the *neg* for bathing the bridegroom just before he starts off for his father-in-law's house. The Nain gets the *neg* for cutting the nails of the bride before the *Bhawren* ceremony. At a girl's marriage the Nai and Nain altogether get about Rs. 15 to Rs. 20. At a boy's marriage they get about five to ten rupees only. At a girl's marriage the Nain also gets the *neg* for singing *gali* (abuses) when the marriage party arrives for the *bhat-ki-dawat*. She also gets *dwar-ke-char-ka-haq* when the marriage party goes to the girl's house for the first time. The Nai gets a *neg* when he goes to the *Janwasa* with two earthen pots full of *sharbat*. For each jar the *neg* of one rupee is given. He gets the *bidai-ka-neg* at the departure of the

marriage party; this is about a rupee or two. (Then he gets the *shishtachar-ka-neg* at the time of *Neutui*). The Nai and Nain do not demand less than a rupee but they get according to the means of the giver. Bhagwati Nai and his wife were called in at the marriage of Phool Mati, daughter of Thakur Muneshwar Singh. Thakur Muneshwar Singh, not being a very well-to-do person, gave Bhagwati Nai and his wife eleven rupees only for their work. In Jadhav's marriage Bhagwati Nai and his wife did all the required work and got, in return, four rupees in all.

The Pasi are asked to accompany a Thakur's marriage party, and they have proved themselves so reliable and trustworthy that they are asked to look after the gold and silver ornaments. When the bridegroom goes to the bride's place, he is accompanied by a Pasi, who leaves the bridegroom at the door step. Diwan, Jai Karan, Lootoo, Lalidin, Lachman and Nanhe are considered very reliable Pasis and are asked to accompany the marriage parties of Thakurs to look after the valuable things. The Pasi supply the *pattal* for the wedding feast. They give the *byohar* of one or two rupees at the marriage of a Thakur boy or girl. The Thakur of course are obliged to return double the amount at a Pasi's marriage.

At a Thakur girl's marriage, the Pasi bring a *nand* of clay and *kulhars* from the Kumhar's house and clothes from the *darzi* (tailor). They call the *mali* (gardener) on ceremonial occasions. The Pasi remain in attendance on the Thakur's family the whole day. The Pasi family is provided with food both times. From the bridegroom's side the Pasi get some gift in the form of money or silver ornaments. At the marriage of Phool Mati, Thakur Muneshwar Singh's daughter, last year, Kali Din Pasi supplied the above-mentioned articles and remained in attendance. In return he got Rs. 2.50 as reward.

At a boy's marriage they do the same kind of work as at a girl's. They bring an iron *teer* (arrow) at the departure of the marriage party and give it to the bridegroom. They get the *nichchawar* of Rs. 1.25 to Rs. 5. They usually get Rs. 2 to Rs. 4 at a boy's marriage, besides the food, both *kachcha* and *pakka*. At the marriage of Ram Naresh Singh, son of Thakur Bindra Singh, Siv Charan Pasi brought the iron *teer* and accompanied the bridegroom to the bride's house. In return for his work, he got Rs. 4.

The Thakur also participate in a Pasi's wedding, if invited to do so. After giving the *byohar,* however, they go home, without eating anything or even accepting water at the Pasi's place. Among the Thakurs who attended the marriage of Siv Kumar Pasi, son of Jai Karan Pasi, were Jodh Singh, Baran Singh, Murari Singh, Karan Singh and Jadhav Singh. After giving the *byohar* of Re. 1 to Rs. 2 each, the Thakurs went away without taking any food.

At the marriage of a Thakur girl, both the Dhobi and Dhobin have certain jobs traditionally assigned to them. They get their food at the Thakur's place for four to seven days during the marriage. Dhobin is called on the second day to give the *Sohag.* She fills the parting of the bride's hair with *sindoor* (vermilion), she gets Re. 1 to Rs. 5 as the *neg,* or she may be given a *sari.* At the marriage of Phool Mati, daughter of Thakur Muneshwar Singh, the wife of Dubare Dhobi came to give the *Sohag.* Both the Dhobi and his wife worked in the house and got Rs. 5 as reward for their work. She was not given a cloth because Muneshwar Singh could not afford it. The Dhobi has another job to perform. On the marriage day, the bridegroom's brother holds a piece of cloth, two and a half yards in length, over the heads of the couple. The Dhobi holds the other end of the cloth. Barley *khils* are showered on the couple and collected on this piece of cloth. The Dhobi gets *inam* for this in the form of cooking utensils, clothes or money. But nowadays only money is given. Dubare Dhobi got the *neg* at the marriage of Jadhav Singh, son of Thakur Nath Singh. Dhobis, however, are not required to join the Thakur marriage parties. They pay *byohar* at a Thakur boy's marriage and are paid back the same day with some addition. Thakurs often go to Dhobi marriages but come back after paying the *byohar,* without taking any food, *kachcha* or *pakka.*

The Chamar have nothing to do in a Thakur boy's or girl's marriage. They, if invited, accompany the marriage party of a Thakur boy. Kallu Chamar accompanied the marriage party of Thakur Rameshwar Singh, son of the *Sarpanch.*

The Bhaksor come in the *Main* and *Tel* ceremonies—these ceremonies, though in connection with marriage, are celebrated much before the actual marriage ceremony—with their *baja* (musical instruments) like *Dhol, Sarangi,* etc., and give a music

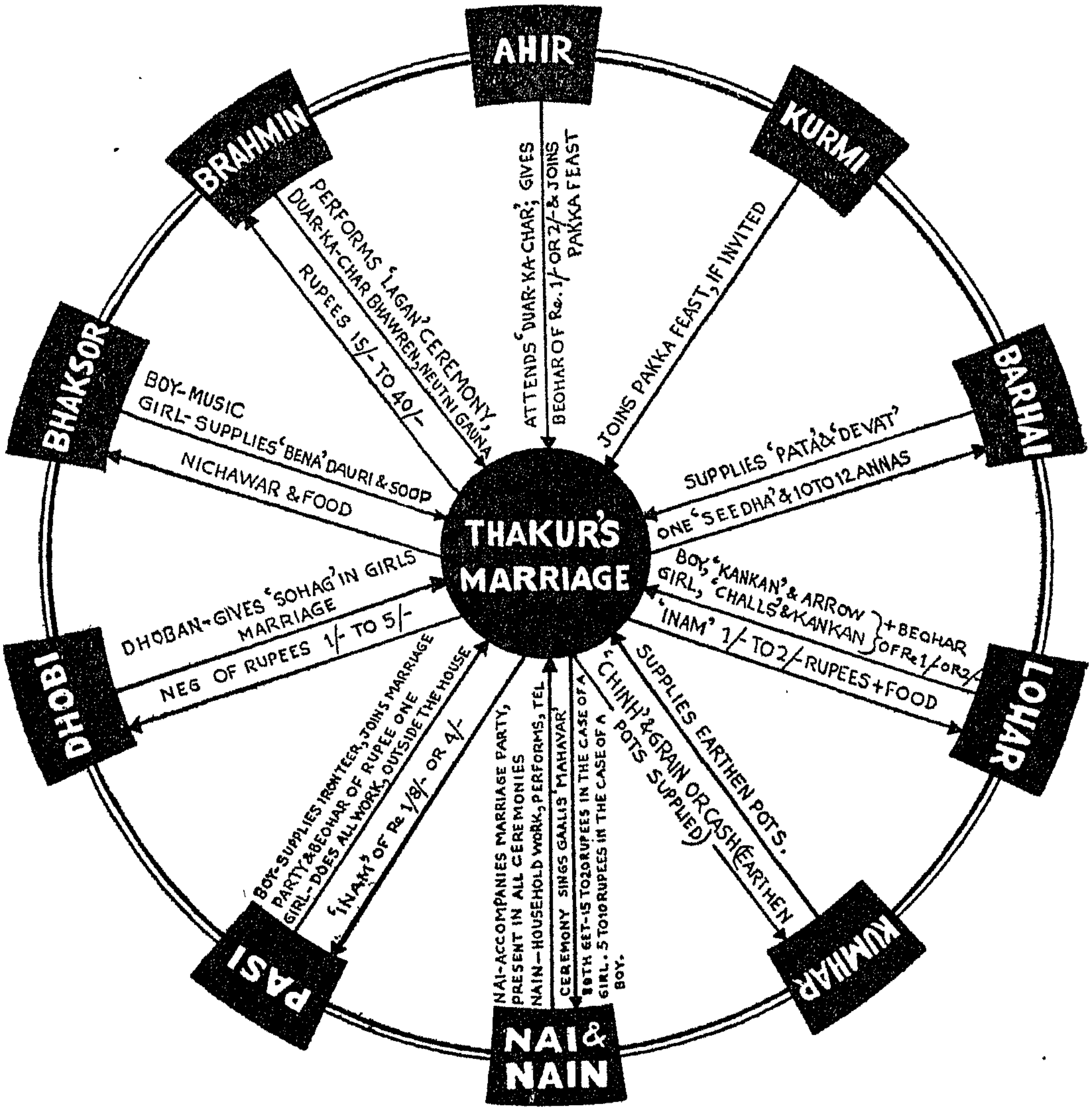
performance. They give another music performance at marriage. They are given some grain and *nichchawar* of a few coins. Food is also given to them. They are called in by the Thakur for giving a music performance at marriages of both girls and boys. The charges in cash are decided beforehand.

At a Thakur girl's marriage, the Bhaksor supplies the *bena* (fan), *soop* and *dauri* and gets the *nichchawar* and *Bidai*. He and his family also get food—both *pakka* and *kachcha*—as long as the marriage party stays there. In Phool Mati's marriage last year, Mulha Bhaksor supplied the *bena*, *soop* and *dauri* in return for which he was given 56 nP.

At a boy's marriage, he supplies the *Dal* (a bamboo basket) in which the auspicious things for marriage are kept and carried to the bride's house. He is given the *neg* of Rs. 1.25 for this. Sometimes he may get Rs. 2, or even up to Rs. 5. He may also accompany the marriage party with the *baja*. Bhaksor used to get a payment of two to five rupees in the olden days when the Thakur were prosperous. Now they seldom get more than a rupee or a rupee and a half. For Raja Ram's marriage, Sewak Bhaksor supplied the *Dal* and in return was given Re. 1.

Sociogram No. 3 shows the participation of different castes in a Thakur's marriage.

Death. When a Thakur dies, the Brahmin accompanies the *tikti* (coffin) of the dead to the burning ghat and performs the ceremony of *tel dilana*, when the ancestors of the dead are offered *tel* or mustard oil to propitiate their spirits. At the *Teraheen* ceremony—13th day after death—the Brahmin receives alms from the members of the bereaved family, on behalf of the dead. He also participates in the feast by cooking his own meal and taking it at the Thakur's house. There is another feast at *Barsi* (first death anniversary) and the Brahmin participates in it by accepting the *seedha* from the Thakur' house, cooking his own food and eating it there. At the *Sradh*, the Brahmin is fed by the descendants of the dead. It is believed that during *Sradh*, which lasts for fifteen days, the souls of all the dead ancestors of the family visit the house. Water is offered to these souls of the dead while the Brahmin reads some *slokas*, praying that the souls of the dead may be kind to their living relations and cause them no harm.



SOCIOGRAM No. 3
Pattern of inter-caste relations at a Thakur's marriage

The Brahmin may also receive the *Baitarni gai* (cow). It is believed that if a cow is given in charity to a Brahmin, the soul of the departed would get it and, by catching hold of its tail, cross the mythical river of *Baitarni* in order to reach the heavens. There is a sub-caste among the Brahmins, called *Maha Brahman*. They receive the clothes and other personal belongings of the deceased, if the latter's descendants can afford to part with them. In the zamindari days when the Thakur landlords were rich, they used to give the Maha Brahman a cot, a jug, blankets, *razais* (quilts),

bed sheets, umbrellas, cows, buffaloes, horses, etc. But not so now. About 13 years ago, when Thakur Baran Singh's father died, Gangoolay Maharaj (who was a Maha Brahman) of the village Asthi, received the clothes and one *lota*, one glass, one *thali*, one *katori*, one *chammach* (spoon) belonging to the deceased.

Ahir do not go on the death of a Thakur nor do they accompany the funeral procession to the burning ghat. They do not consider it proper to attend the feast on a Thakur's *Barsi*. If, however, an Ahir happens to be on very friendly terms with a Thakur, he may accompany the latter's funeral procession. Tori Ahir had very cordial relations with Baran Singh's father, and when the latter died, he accompanied the funeral procession to the burning ghat.

The Kurmi accompany the funeral procession at the death of a Thakur and take part in the death rituals, such as taking bath at the *marghat* and participating in the mourning. They, however, generally hesitate to attend the feast on *Barsi*. The only Kurmi in Mohana is on very good terms with most of the Thakur and almost invariably goes to attend the funeral ceremonies of a Thakur.

The Barhai has no work to do at the death of a Thakur and, therefore, does not accompany the funeral procession.

The Lohar, also, generally do not attend the funeral of a Thakur. If a Lohar attends the funeral of a Thakur, it is due to personal relations. They, however, participate in the feast at *Teradeen* and *Barsi*, when *pakka* food is served, since Lohars do not accept *kachcha* food from the Thakur. Parag Lohar participated in the funeral ceremony of Thakur Buksh Singh, father of Thakur Jodh Singh.

The Kumhar go at the death of a Thakur and also accompany the funeral procession. They participate in the mourning. They also attend feasts on *Teraheen* and *Barsi*. Prabhu, Hira and Jagdeo Kumhar accompanied the funeral procession of Raghubir Singh, father of Thakur Iqbal Singh, and attended the *Teraheen* and *Barsi* feasts.

The Nai accompanies the *tikti* (coffin) of the Thakur to the *marghat* and shaves the hair of the eldest son of the deceased. He does not get any payment for this work. At the death of a Thakur, Sarjoo and Bhagwati Nai usually go to shave the hair of the eldest son.

On the occasion of *Barsi* the Nai does all the household work. He gives out the invitations to all the people who are invited to the *Barsi* feast, and serves water to the guests at the *pakki dawat.*

The Pasi always accompany the funeral procession. A Thakur, however, does not go at the death of a Pasi, but he may go to see his *gorait,* if the latter is seriously ill. When Kali Din Pasi, *gorait* of Thakur Ajodhya Singh, was ill some months back, the latter did go to see him. Pasi take the food at *Teraheen* and *Barsi.* In *Sradh* they are given food on one day, on the occasion when the Brahmins are called at the feast.

The Dhobi usually do not form part of the funeral procession of a Thakur. They come only to give *mitti.* The Thakur never go to Dhobi funerals. The Chamar do not accompany a Thakur's funeral procession, nor do the Bhaksor.

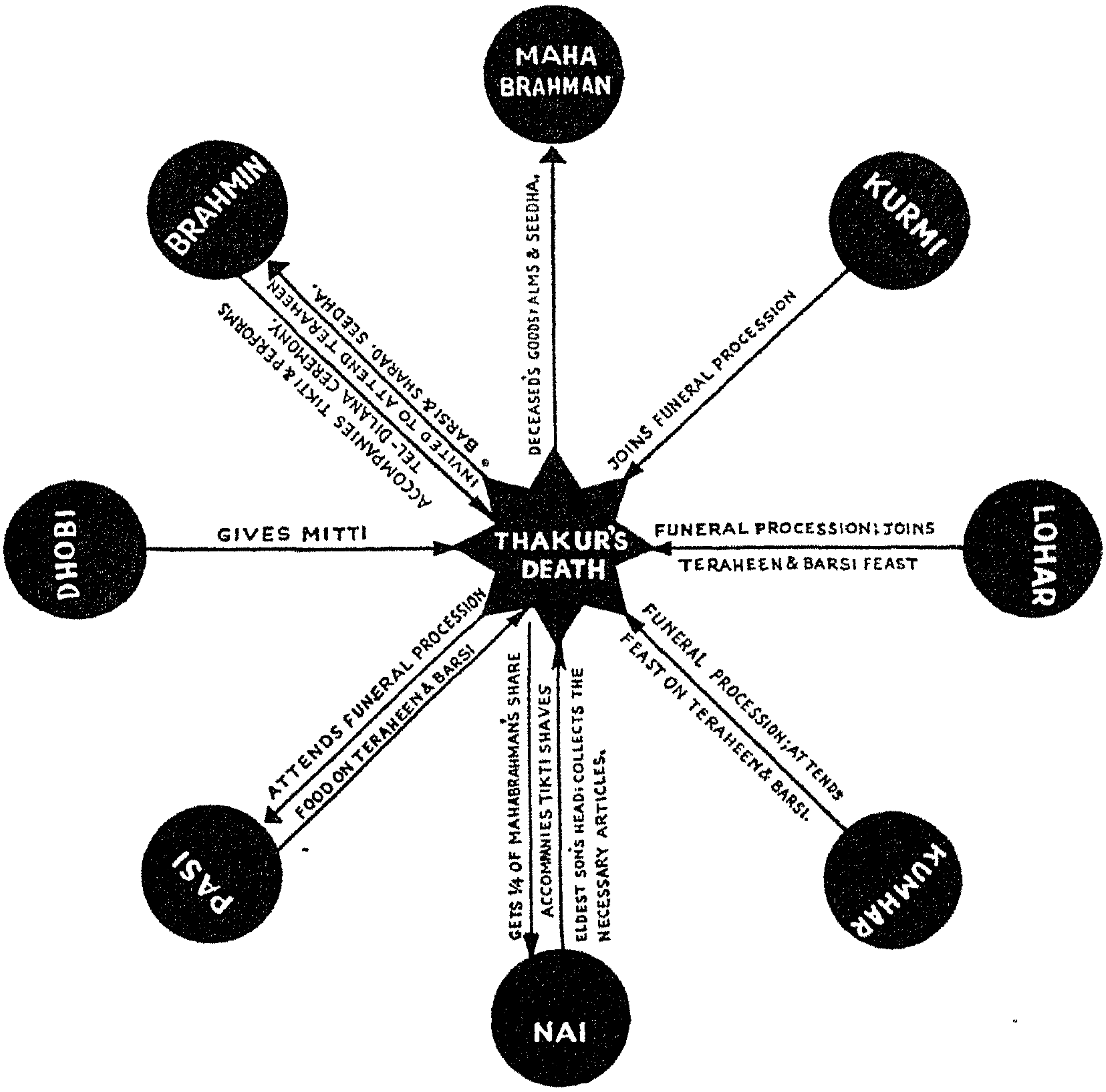
Sociogram No. 4 shows the pattern of inter-caste relations on the occasion of a Thakur's death.

In zamindari days, the *praja* were expected to go to the Thakur houses on ceremonial occasions and ask for their *inam.* Failure on the part of one of the *praja* to do so was taken as an indication of his arrogance, and was interpreted as his refusal to work for that Thakur family in future. This is of course not applicable now, ever since the zamindari abolition.

Katha. A Brahmin, usually Prashad Shukla in this village, is asked to recite *katha* at a Thakur's place. For this he gets Rs. 1.25. Some time back when Prashad was called to recite *katha* at Thakur Raghubir Singh's house, he was given Rs. 1.25.

The Ahir participate in *katha* at a Thakur's place and accept the *prasad* willingly. At the *katha path* at the house of Thakur Nath Singh, Prashad Ahir, Tori Ahir and some other Ahirs were present and partook of the *prasad.* The Thakur also attend *katha* at an Ahir's house and accept the *prasad.* Bhabuti Ahir arranged a *katha path* at his house, when Thakur Ajodhya Singh attended and accepted *prasad,* distributed by the Brahmin, Prashad Shukla.

The Thakur invite Kurmis to attend the *katha* at their place and take the *prasad.* Thakurs themselves also accept the *prasad* from the Kurmi whenever there is *katha* at the Kurmi house. Junga Kurmi always attends the *katha* at a Thakur's place. He himself has never arranged one for the last many years. The essential part



SOCIOGRAM No. 4

Pattern of inter-caste relations at a Thakur's death

of *prasad* is *panjiri* which consists of roasted flour with sugar and some dry fruits added to it.

Thakurs attend the *katha* at a Lohar's place and offer a few naiye paise on the *arti* and take the *prasad*. Parag Lohar arranged a *katha* at his place some months back, when all the prominent Thakurs of the village, including Thakur Nath Singh, Bir Singh, Jodh Singh, Maharaj Singh, attended and accepted the *prasad* distributed by Prashad Shukla.

For the *katha*, the Kumhar supplies a clay pot in which water is kept and a lamp lighted over it, known as *kalas*. In return he gets

6 nP and some grain. The Kumhar offers 2 or 3 nP on the *arti* and takes the *prasad*. Prabhu Kumhar supplied the *kalas* for the *katha* arranged by Thakur Jadu Nath Singh. He offered 2 nP for the *arti*. In return, he got the *prasad* and some grain.

When there is *katha* at a Thakur's house, the Nai is called to do the household work and give out the invitations. He gets 9 nP and food for the day. Sarjoo Nai was in attendance at the *katha path* arranged by Thakur Bir Singh. He was given 6 nP and food for the day. If there is *katha* at a Thakur's place, the Pasi supply the *pattal* and carry the invitations also. They are given the *prasad* and one meal. Siv Charan Pasi supplied the *pattal* at the *katha* arranged by Thakur Nath Singh.

The Thakur generally avoid going to a Dhobi's house. But they go to a *katha* arranged by the Dhobi and accept *prasad*, if it is prepared by a Brahmin.

The Brahmin do not recite *katha* in the house of a Chamar. If the Chamar wish to arrange a *katha*, the Brahmin recites it at the *Deothan*. This is believed to be a sacred *Neem* tree in front of Bhagwati Nai's house; this tree is believed to be the abode of Goddess Durga. There is another sacred *Peepal* tree, in front of Puran Chamar's house, where Bhuiya Devi is supposed to reside. The Brahmin goes to either of these two places and says *katha* there, whenever the Chamar wish to arrange it. The Thakur do not attend the *katha path* arranged by the Chamar.

The Bhaksor come to take the *prasad* if there is *katha* at a Thakur's place. Sewak Bhaksor was given the *prasad* at Thakur Jadu Nath Singh's *katha path*. In recent years, the two Bhaksor families of Mohana have not arranged a *katha path* of their own.

4. Relationship among Other Castes

AHIR AND PASI. To a superficial observer, Ahir and Pasi might appear to get on well, but really it is not so. Though there have not been very many litigations between these two groups, still one senses a feeling of pride on the part of the Ahir and that of rebellion and lack of respect on the part of the Pasi. The Ahir regard the Pasi as untouchables, and so the Pasi avoid going to the Ahir in times of need. They do not address the Ahir by kinship terms. Formerly, when an Ahir child was born, Pasi supplied *pattals* for the *chatti* and *barah* ceremonies, and they were given food. Sometimes they were given gifts in the form of clothes and utensils. Now this practice is being gradually given up, for the Ahir buy the *pattals* from the market.

Invitations to Pasi for Ahir marriages are very rare. Sometimes they are invited to accompany the *pai-punji* or the marriage party of the bride. In such cases they get a rupee and one meal. To an Ahir boy's marriage too they are sometimes invited, but they usually are not eager to attend it. If a Pasi gives a present (usually a rupee or two) at an Ahir marriage, it is returned to the Pasi, when a marriage takes place in his family. Generally the Pasi do not attend Ahir funerals, unless they are on very friendly terms with that family; when they do, they join the funeral procession and throw a handful of sand on the dead. They do not participate in the *teraheen* or *barsi* ceremonies but they may attend the *Sradh* if invited. Ahir seldom participate in the funeral rites of Pasi.

The Ahir cannot accept food or water from a Pasi, and if they attend a *katha* organised by a Pasi, they will accept the *prasad* only if prepared and distributed by the Brahmin Pandit. The Pasi say that though the Ahir regard them as untouchables, yet Ahir men do not mind having intimate affairs with Pasi women.

Ahir and Nai. Though an Ahir and a Nai do not move very freely

with each other, still there exist no ill-feelings between these two caste-groups. In the case of a child-birth in an Ahir's family, the Nain's work begins after *chatti*, when she has to massage the mother and the child for 12 days. The Nain accepts only grain for this work, because Nai do not accept *kachcha* food from Ahir. If it is a male child she gets eight seers of grain and 12 nP; if a female child she gets six seers of grain and 3 nP. In *Mundan* the Nai shaves the head of the child. For a boy he gets a rupee, and for a girl 50 nP. Besides this, he receives a present also.

At the marriage of an Ahir boy, a Nai applies oil and massages the body of the groom. The oil that was offered to the gods at the ceremony of *chai dareli* is used for this purpose. The Nai is given 10 seers of grain. He is invited to accompany the marriage party. The Nai takes the ornaments from the groom to the bride, for which he gets 31 nP. He also takes the clay lamps and receives 16 nP for this. He accompanies the groom to the bride's door for the *pooja*, and also for the *Bhawren* ceremony; for the former he gets 50 nP and for the latter a rupee. Besides this, the bride's party also pays him something.

On the bride's side, a Nain applies oil on her and massages her, and is paid 10 seers of grain for this. When the groom's party arrives for the marriage, and resides at the bride's place, the Nai helps the groom to take his bath, but normally he does not serve the other guests thus. He does not serve water at the feast as he does in a Thakur marriage, but he fills the clay pipes of the guests with tobacco. For these services he is given a *seedha*. After the feasts he does not remove the *pattals*. Formerly he used to remove the *pattals* of Brahmin and Thakur, but not now. The Nain trims the nails of the bride for which she is given a rupee.

Though the Nai refuse to accept cooked food from the Ahir, they accept water from them and share their smoking *chilams* with them. People of either caste address the elders of the other group by kinship terms.

Ahir and Kurmi. There is some difference of opinion regarding the respective social and caste position of the Ahir and the Kurmi on the caste hierarchy. Each caste regards itself higher than the other and their relations with Thakur do not reflect any clear picture. Thakur Jodh Singh regards the Kurmi higher than the

Ahir as the Kurmi widows do not remarry. Nath Singh, on the other hand, assigns to Ahir a higher status because of their commensal relations with the Thakur.

Lohar and Kumhar. These two communities are on the most friendly terms in Mohana, perhaps because they are almost on the same level of social status. A Kumhar and a Lohar are real friends. There is only one restriction, that is, members of neither caste will accept *kachcha* food from the other. *Pakka* food and water are freely exchanged between these two castes as also is the *prasad* distributed after a *katha* recital. There is no disparity in their seating. They can sit on the same cot. A Kumhar and a Lohar can share a smoking *chilam* and the one can accept a *bidi* offered by the other. They are helpful to each other in time of need, and very rarely is there a quarrel between the Lohars and the Kumhars of Mohana.

The services of Lohar are not needed at the time of Kumhar child-births, but due to personal friendship the Lohar do visit the Kumhar at this time. At the *chatti* ceremony of Kumhar children the Lohar offer a *kajrauta* (a small iron vessel to keep *kajal*—black applied on the eyes) and a *churwa* (an iron bangle). These articles are supplied on the request of the Kumhar, and the Lohar who supplies them gets either a few coins or a present in kind. At the marriage of a Kumhar girl, the Lohar supplies (again on request) five or seven iron rings for the bride and he gets the customary gifts. For any of their own ceremonies the Lohar buy all the earthen vessels they need from the Kumhar. People of either caste take part in the funeral rites of the other, but they avoid going to each other's place for the thirteenth day ceremony.

Lohar and Nai. Lohar and Nai also occupy an almost equal place in the caste hierarchy, and their relations with each other are smooth and cordial. The Nain attends on the Lohar mother and child for 12 days after *chatti,* and she is given the customary share of grain. She is also invited to the *chatti* and *barah* feasts. At the birth of a Nai child the Lohar supplies the conventional *churwa* and *kajrauta,* and gets 50 to 75 nP as gift. But the Lohar do not participate in the *chatti* and *barha* ceremonies of a Nai. In the *Mundan* ceremony of a Lohar child, the Nai performs the ceremonial shaving of head, for which he gets Re. 1 in the case of a

boy and 50 nP in the case of a girl. If a feast is arranged to celebrate this occasion the Nai serves water and offers the *chilam* and tobacco to the guests. Six or seven years ago, the Nai used to remove the *pattals* after the feast, but now this is not done.

The Nai and their women are invited to attend Lohar marriages, at which they perform the same services as they do for Thakur and Ahir brides and bridegrooms. They are given the customary payments and presents in cash or kind. Lohar attend Nai marriages if invited, and they give a small iron ring, known as *kankan*, which is tied on to the wrist of the groom, for it is considered to be very auspicious. The Nai attends the funeral of a Lohar, when he shaves the head of the eldest son of the deceased. Nais also participate in the Lohar *daswan* (tenth day after death) ceremony. Lohar also attend the funerals of Nain. Either caste can accept *prasad* from the other.

There is no exchange of food between these two communities but giving and accepting water is very common. They smoke the same *chilam*, but not the same *hookah*. There is no disparity in their seating in the presence of each other. People of either caste address the elders of the other by kinship terms. In exchanging *Holi* greetings a Nai and a Lohar embrace each other. Both these castes are always busy in the pursuit of their respective traditional professions, and their houses are far away in the village, so there is not much chance for people of these two communities to meet very often but when they do meet, it is always a friendly meeting.

Lohar and Pasi. The Pasi are considered to be lower than the Lohar, but the Lohar do not try to show off their superiority, and hence relations between these two caste-groups are smooth and friendly. As the Lohar do not accept food or water from the Pasi they do not participate in any of the ceremonies held in Pasi families. If a Lohar arranges a feast on the occasion of *chatti* or *barah*, a Pasi supplies the *pattals*, and he is provided with food for that day. The same is the case at a Lohar *Mundan* ceremony, with the exception that on this occasion the Pasi is given a few coins also. At the marriage of a Pasi boy the Lohar used to supply a *kara* and a *kankan*, and got 25-37 nP in return. If they did not get anything, they would not ask for it. However, now this

practice is being given up, for the Pasi do not regard the *kankan* as an indispensable article for marriage, and use any piece of iron in its place. Hence it is not very essential for the Lohars to attend a Pasi marriage. At a Pasi girl's marriage, the Lohar goes to give the customary gift of a rupee or two and does not supply any other articles. In Pasi *katha* ceremonies Lohars accept the *prasad* only if it is prepared and distributed by a Thakur or a Brahmin. The Pasi do not attend the death ceremonies of a Lohar, nor do the Lohar attend those of a Pasi.

The Lohar offer their *chilam* to the Pasi, and can accept their *chilam*, but the *hookah* is not exchangeable. Kinship terms are used by members of either caste to address elders of the other. When a Pasi meets a Lohar the former offers salutation first. The Pasi, on meeting the Lohar, offer them seats, and they themselves would sit on the ground but the Lohar do not mind sitting with the Pasi, even on the ground. People of either caste can crack jokes at the expense of those of the other group. These two caste-people live together, peacefully.

Lohar and Chamar. The Chamar are much lower than the Lohar in caste status, and hence participation in each others' ceremonies is rare. When a Chamar child is born the Lohar takes a *kajrauta* for the child and a *churwa* for the mother. But this is only when the Chamar family request the Lohar to bring these articles. In return the Lohar is given some gift, and grain or cash as payment for the articles brought by him. At the marriage of a Chamar boy the Lohar offers the groom a *kankan* of his own accord, and receives Rs. 1.25 in return. He does not take part in the marriage in any other way. When a Lohar boy gets married, the Chamar supplies him with a pair of shoes. Since the Chamar of Mohana have given up their traditional profession, they have to buy shoes for this purpose. Lohar are often not in a position to pay immediately for the shoes, and the payment is made in instalments. Even in this way, the Chamar does not get the actual price, hence this custom of presenting shoes to a Lohar bridegroom is slowly dying out. Chamar are never invited to accompany Lohar marriage parties, but they help at the marriages of Lohar girls if invited. In return they get money and meals or *disha*. Members of either community participate in the funeral rites of those of the other.

The Lohar do not accept food or water from Chamar. Chamar can sit with Lohar, *bidis* and *chilams* can be exchanged but not the *hookah*. Lohar purchase vegetables grown by Chamar and they also purchase milk from the Chamar, provided the animals are milked by a Lohar. Chamars work as labourers in the fields of Lohars. The usual form of address between people of these two communities is by kinship terms. An elderly Chamar may scold a Lohar boy, but not beat him, whereas a Lohar may beat a Chamar boy.

In spite of the difference in their status, the Chamar and the Lohar have always been friendly, and this cordial relationship has in no way been impaired by the zamindari abolition.

Kumhar and Nai. The services of the Nain are required at the birth of a Kumhar child ; and she is given the customary payment. The Nai is indispensable at *Mundan*. For shaving the head of a boy he gets Re. 1 and for a girl 50 nP. At this ceremony the Nai offers water and the *chilam* to the guests, but he does not remove the *pattals* after the feast. The Nain is sent round with the invitations to the *Mundan* ceremony and she gets either 2 nP or a little grain. The Nai and the Nain have to be in attendance on the bride and the groom at a Kumhar marriage, and perform the various rituals as they do in marriages of other caste people. Contrary to this Kumhar have nothing to do in the ceremonies of Nais, except to supply clay pots, and that also only when asked for.

The Nai consider themselves to be higher than the Kumhar, but after the zamindari abolition, Kumhar refuse to accept this position, and behave as though they are equal to the Nai, if not higher. People of either caste accost the other by kinship terms. A Kumhar can beat a Nai boy, if the latter is found doing something wrong. A Nai can also beat a Kumhar boy under similar circumstances. On the occasion of *Holi*, Nai and Kumhar embrace each other in greeting.

Though there have been quarrels between Nai and Kumhar, on the whole, relations between the two castes are friendly.

Kumhar and Gadaria. Gadaria do not participate in the birth and *Mundan* ceremonies of the Kumhar. On the other hand the Kumhar supplies the *kulhars* and other vessels for these ceremonies at a Gadaria's place, for which he is paid in cash.

Gadaria attend a Kumhar girl's marriage, but go away after performing the *pair puja*. They do not take any food there. At a boy's marriage they give the customary present of a rupee or two, but they do not participate in any of the ceremonies. At the wedding house they accept *sharbat* and tobacco, nothing else. At a Gadaria wedding the Kumhar give the customary present, but do not take food. The necessary earthen vessels are supplied by Kumhar, for which they are paid in cash. A person of either caste can accept *prasad* from a person of the other caste, but otherwise there is no exchange of food between the two castes. Kumhar join the funeral procession of Gadarias, but do not take part in any of the rites or in the feasts of *teraheen* and *barsi*. Gadaria do the same in the case of a Kumhar's death.

The Gadaria and the Kumhar can sit together. They address each other by kinship terms, and can share the *chilam*.

Kumhar and Kurmi. The Kumhar consider themselves equal to the Kurmi, but the Kurmi think the Kumhar to be slightly below them. In the various ceremonies, the Kumhar do not offer presents to Kurmi, and they take food at a Kurmi's house only when invited. Kurmi also do not participate in any of the ceremonies of Kumhar. In Kurmi marriages the earthen vessels are supplied by Kumhar for which they are paid. They are also invited to take food on this occasion. Neither Kumhar nor Kurmi take part in the funeral rites of each other.

They can take *pakka* food at each other's place, but not *kachcha* food; however, in other villages Kurmi refuse to take even *pakka* food from the Kumhar. A Kurmi and a Kumhar embrace each other on the occasion of *Holi*. *Bidis* and *chilams* are shared and sometimes even the *hookah*. They address each other by kinship terms.

Kumhar and Pasi. These two castes were good friends till four or five years ago, when one of the Kumhars was severely beaten by a Pasi. No one knew why. The Kumhars were on the look-out for an opportunity to take revenge. One evening Putti Pasi was alone in his melon field. Putti Pasi was one of those who had beaten the Kumhars, so now all the Kumhar rallied round, beat Putti very hard and left him unconscious. He was found in that condition by his friends, who wanted to take revenge. But Putti

could not name any of his attackers. So the Pasi surrounded the houses of all the Kumhar. However, the Thakur intervened and pacified the Pasi. Though to all external appearances the Pasi and Kumhar are very friendly, still the geniality of their friendship was lost with that quarrel, and has not been restored so far. However, this does not prevent a Pasi or a Kumhar from helping each other in times of need.

Participation in each other's ceremonies depends upon personal relations. The Kumhar do not accept any kind of food at a Pasi's place. So the Pasi do not invite them to attend any of the ceremonies. However, they are asked to supply earthenware for the occasions, for which they are paid, and are given a present, besides. In the *chatti* and *barha* ceremonies of the Kumhar, they invite the Pasi who willingly participate and help in the celebrations. *Pattals* are supplied by Pasi, who in return get cooked food and grain.

Pasi are invited to Kumhar marriages and requested to accompany the marriage party and they are treated very well. But while taking food they have to sit apart from the others. For services rendered at a marriage Pasi are given gifts and some grain.

At festivals the Kumhar distribute food and sweets to the Pasi. On the occasion of *Holi* Kumhar visit the Pasi to greet them, but they do not embrace each other. For *Deewali* the Kumhar supply earthen lamps and are paid in cash. Members of both castes can sit together, exchange *bidis* and *chilam*, and address one another by kinship terms. Pasi accept both *kachcha* and *pakka* food from the Kumhar, but a Kumhar will not take even water from a Pasi. Members of either caste can work in the house or in the fields of the other as labourers, but such instances are rare.

Kumhar and Chamar. The social and economic disparity between Kumhar and Chamar prevents free movement between the two communities, but there is no apparent tension between them, and they accost each other by various kinship terms. On the *Holi* Chamar visit the Kumhar to exchange greetings, but they do not embrace each other. Kumhar supply the lamps for *Deewali* for which they are given spot payment. Kumhar do not accept even water from the Chamar, and Chamar do not like to take food or water from the Kumhar. At *katha* ceremonies in Chamar houses,

Kumhar accept *prasad* only if it is prepared and distributed by the Brahmin Pandit.

Neither do the Kumhar visit the Chamar, nor do Chamar the Kumhar, on occasions of child-birth or *chatti*. For the *barha* ceremony of Chamar, Kumhar offer earthen pots and are given grain and two *seedhas*. Chamar give the Kumhar five seers of grain along with the price of pots supplied by them at Chamar marriages. If the Chamar supply a pair of shoes at a Kumhar marriage they get the price of the shoe, half a seer of grain and one rupee. But generally the Chamar do not supply the shoes. A reciprocal present of a rupee or two is given in the marriages of either community by members of the other. They participate in each other's funeral rites but not in the *teraheen* ceremony. The Chamar can work as labourers for the Kumhar, but they prefer to work under the Thakur even if the Kumhar offer them higher wages for the Thakur are more influential.

Kurmi and Pasi. It is difficult to ascertain the general relationship between the Kurmi and other castes because there is only one Kurmi family in the village. This solitary Kurmi gets on well with all the villagers, for he is blessed with a ready wit and humour. Further he is old and so the others do not cause him any trouble. Being alone there are no ceremonies at his place, and so it is impossible to know the extent and manner of participation of other castes in Kurmi ceremonies.

The Pasi are considered lower than the Kurmi. They accept *pakka* food and water from the Kurmi but not *vice versa*. Both communities refuse *kachcha* food at each other's place. This is the opinion of Pasi, but the Kurmi asserts that his caste people will not accept any food at all from the Pasi, and that they will not allow the Pasi to touch their vessels. According to him Pasis cannot sit with Kurmis and take food. For purposes of casual conversation they may sit together, joke with each other and share their *bidis* and *chilam*. The *hookah* is not exchangeable. On one occasion a Pasi jokingly said in the presence of Kurmi that Kurmi were an admixture of two groups, viz., the Kories and Muslims, and that was why they were called Kurmis—*Kur* from Kories and *Mi* from Mians (Muslims). The Kurmi replied saying that they were so called because they were descendants of the *Kur* (family) of God himself.

Nai and Pasi. The Nai consider the Pasi very inferior to them, and so do not take food or water from them. However when a child is born in a Pasi family, the Nain has to do all the customary work. Pasi have no allotted work to do for the Nais at the time of child-birth except to supply *pattal* for *chatti* and *barha* feasts. Again on the occasion of *Mundan pattals* are supplied by the Pasi, while at the *Mundan* of a Pasi child a Nai does the ceremonial hair-cutting. The usual gifts are given for all these services. As is common in marriages of all castes the Nai and Nain are in attendance on the bride and the groom, and the Nai waits on the guests also. At funerals too, the Nai's services are indispensable, for he must join in the procession and shave the head of the heir of the deceased.

At Nai marriages Pasi are invited to keep watch over valuables. They can also take part in the funeral rites of a Nai. On the whole, contacts between these two groups are only at these ceremonies, when each performs the various services assigned to it by tradition and custom.

Pasi and Dhobi. It is not certain if the Pasi are higher or lower than the Dhobi in the caste hierarchy. According to the Pasi, they are higher, for, they say that the Dhobi wash the clothes of the lower class people and are, therefore, considered equal to the Chamar and Bhaksor. Hence a Pasi will not accept food or water from a Dhobi; a Dhobi too will not accept either of these from a Pasi. They do not actively participate in each other's ceremonies. The participation is confined only to the giving and receiving of presents on ceremonial occasions.

As in other castes, at the time of child-birth in a Pasi family, the Dhobi is informed and he collects the unclean clothes for washing. It is the same at a marriage or funeral also. Pasi, however, refuse to supply *pattal* for any of the ceremonies in a Dhobi family. Elders of either caste are addressed by kinship terms by younger folk from the other caste.

Pasi and Chamar. Pasi tend to look down on the Chamar for the latter caste is one of the lowest in the order of social hierarchy. They do not take part in any of the Chamar ceremonies except in marriages and funerals. Chamars may attend Pasi ceremonies if invited, though they have no conventional service to perform.

However, Pasi do not like to invite the Chamar for their feasts and ceremonies. When a Pasi attends a Chamar marriage, it is only to offer the customary present. The Chamar accept both food and water from the Pasi, but the Pasi never accept either from the Chamar.

Dhobi and Chamar. The Chamar say that their status is equal to that of the Dhobi; however, the latter are not of this opinion, and the relations that these two castes have with the other castes show that the opinion of the Dhobi is shared by the others, for the Dhobi are treated better than the Chamar. The Pandit of the village recites *katha* at the houses of the Dhobi, but he would never enter a Chamar's house. On occasions of child-birth, the services of the Nain are not available for the Chamar. The Nai serve the Dhobi, but the Chamar have to forego the services of the Nai in this respect.

In spite of all these concrete proofs of their inferiority, the Chamar claim an equal status with the Dhobi. The relationship is, therefore, reciprocal. Since the Dhobi do not attend any of the Chamar ceremonies, the Chamar will not participate in the ceremonies of Dhobi. Chamar do not work for Dhobi even if high wages are offered. Instead, they would work for the Thakur or other caste people for a nominal wage. The *chilam* and *hookah* are not exchanged, but *bidis* are offered and accepted. Dhobi do not accept *kachcha* or *pakka* food from the Chamar; they do not draw water from Chamar wells. The Chamar behave in exactly the same fashion by not accepting *kachcha* or *pakka* food or water from the Dhobi. The Dhobi will not, unless there is no other way, get milk from the Chamar, and if they have to, they will milk the animals themselves. The Chamar in their turn do not even touch the donkeys and mules owned by the Dhobi. They refuse to remove the carcasses of these animals. They will not accept their hides even if offered these free of cost.

On the other hand, the Dhobi hire bullocks from the Chamar for ploughing, and so Chamar also, when necessary, hire bullocks from Dhobi. They collect the dung of each other's animals to be used as manure or fuel. Dhobis wash the clothes of Chamars and re-
Chamar witch-doctors willingly attend to ailing Dhobis whenthe
quested to do so. In meetings they sit on the same level.

Chamar and Bhaksor. If the Chamar are considered low, there is another group which is regarded even lower, and the Chamar have an opportunity of showing off their superiority now and then. Chamar do not accept food or water from the Bhaksor, who retaliate by refusing water and food from the Chamar. If the latter are to be paid for any work, they demand grain. *Chilam* and *hookah* are not exchanged, but *bidis* may be.

The Bhaksorin offers her services to the Chamarin at childbirth, otherwise the Chamar and the Bhaksor do not in any way participate in each other's ceremonial occasions. But they visit each other in times of illness. A Chamar will not sit with a Bhaksor, and a Bhaksor will not leave his seat to show respect to a Chamar if he comes that way.

There have not been cases of quarrels and disputes between these two castes, but their social contact is limited to professional and traditional relations. Still in times of need, they cooperate with each other.

Attitude towards a foreigner. In a village where caste segregation still exists to such an extent in spite of zamindari abolition and so much propaganda to do away with caste distinctions, one can imagine the fever of excitement into which the village was thrown when a foreigner took up his abode there. He was a research scholar and, as it happened, village Mohana was his field of study. It is evident that he was not popular with the villagers. For one thing, his caste was not known to them, and to add fuel to the fire, he took up his residence with a Nai, taking food prepared by this low-caste man. It was intolerable to the Thakur and other high-caste people. An attitude of indifference was shown not only to the foreigner, but to all those who had any close connections with him. There was the Nai himself, the friend and host of the foreign research scholar. Some of the Thakur would have nothing to do with the Nai and his brother. Once the foreigner went to witness a wrestling bout in Kutwa village. While the bout was going on, the foreigner wanted water. His servant offered him water in a glass which belonged to a Nai. Though this Nai was a close relative of the foreigner's friend, yet he was unlike him, for he flared up against the foreigner's servant for having given his glass to him. The other Nai of the village were also very angry with the foreigner, because one of

their caste had degraded himself by entertaining the foreigner whose caste was unknown.

Jodh Singh, one of the prominent men of the village, does not hold a good opinion of the foreigner, because he had one day asked for Jodh's fingerprints. This made Jodh suspicious of him and he always avoided him. The village Pandit's son was once seen taking tea with the foreigner, and this further lowered the already stained reputation of the former.

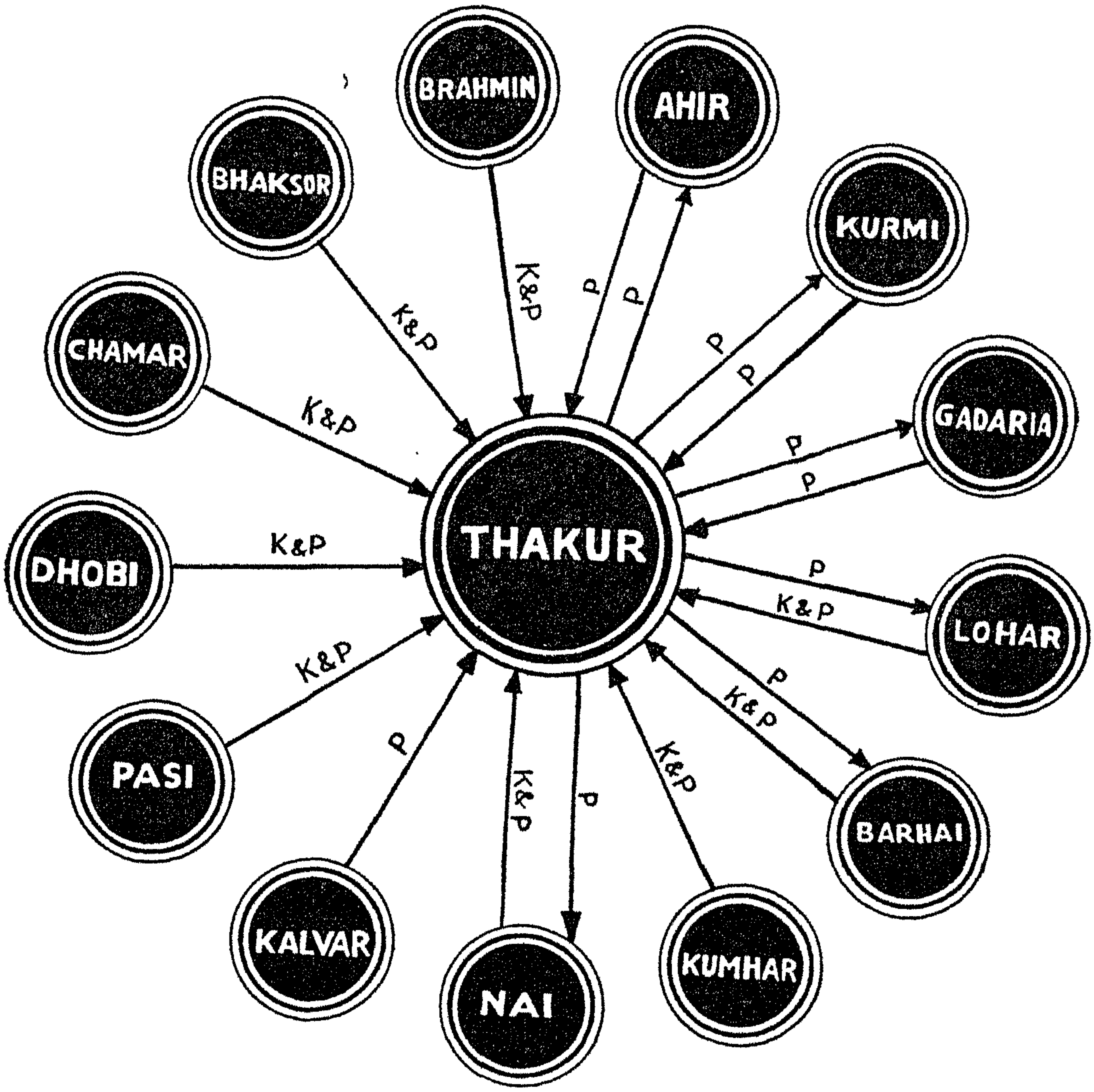
The Thakur felt that the presence of the foreigner emboldened the low-caste people, for he treated them all alike. Thus encouraged, the low-caste people began to think of themselves as equal to the high-caste people. An incident occurred which confirmed the fears of the Thakur. Puran Chamar one day complained to Baran Singh that, owing to the construction of a canal, his (Baran's) field was being damaged, as the canal was to run very close to his fields. At that time Manga Kurmi, Nath Singh, his son Jadhav and Baran were sitting together and talking. While complaining, Puran sat on the bench on which Manga Kurmi was sitting. Nath saw this and whispered something to Baran. Jadhav asked Puran Chamar to get up from the seat. Puran refused, wanting to know why he should leave that seat. Jadhav replied angrily that a Chamar should, in the presence of Thakur, sit only on the ground and not on a seat. Puran reluctantly got up saying that he was offered better seats at the Sahib's house and that the Thakur should not be particular in such matters.

Participation. The Brahmin who are superior to the Thakur in caste status do not accept *kachcha* food at the latter's house or when prepared by them. On the other hand, Thakur can and do accept *kachcha* food in a Brahmin's house at marriage or other ceremonies. The Brahmin do not even take *pakka* food in a Thakur's house on any occasion. They take the raw materials like flour and vegetables and cook their meals with their own hands at the house where they are invited, in marriage ceremonies, *Mundan, Katha, Barsi,* etc. The Brahmin can, however, eat sweets made of milk and curds prepared in a Thakur's house. One Brahmin, Prashad Shukla, who has served in the Indian army as a compounder in the Medical Corps and has visited various places in India and abroad, does not observe the conventional

restrictions in taking food. His is the sole instance in the village of a Brahmin who has no hesitation in taking *kachcha* or *pakka* food from people of any caste. But this can by no means be regarded even as the beginning of a trend. An individual deviation from the traditional norm—in this case easily explained by the fact of his having lived in various cities—shows an exception, but is not illustrative of any shift in the cultural pattern. In this instance, Prasad's father Din Shukla still follows the caste restrictions in respect of food participation.

At a *pakka* feast the Ahir sit together with the Thakur in the same line. The Ahir are of the opinion that if a man of one caste can take water from a man of another, the two castes should have no objection in taking food together. Guru Prasad Ahir sees no harm in accepting *pakka* food from the Thakur. The Ahir, however, do not accept *kachcha* food from the Thakur because the latter generally take meat, while most Ahir are *Bhagats* and are prohibited from taking meat and *kachcha* food from the Thakur. The Thakur generally do not take food at an Ahir's place, though they can accept *pakka* food from an Ahir. Usually the Ahir are not invited to the feasts, except when they accompany a Thakur boy's marriage party. The Ahir sit separately, a little distance away from the Thakur. It is significant that while the Thakur consider the Ahir as inferior to themselves, the Ahir think highly of themselves and call themselves *Bhagats* (holy men). If a Thakur touches a *kachcha* pot belonging to an Ahir, the latter will not drink water out of it. But a Thakur can take water from an Ahir. The food relations of the Ahir and the Thakur have thus remained as they were about twenty-five years ago—with mutual acceptance of *pakka* food only.

The Thakur treat the Kurmi with regard and consideration. The Kurmi are invited by the Thakur on ceremonial occasions, like *Mundan*, marriage, etc., but the Kurmi accept only *pakka* food from the Thakur. But this is explained by an utter physical necessity rather than any new development in Thakur-Kurmi food relations. About a year ago, Junga Kurmi fell seriously ill, with no one to look after him or cook his food. And as there was no other way, he was forced to accept the *kachcha* food from the Thakur—caste and custom had to bow before necessity. Since



SOCIOGRAM No. 5 (A)
Food participation of different castes with the Thakur—
about 25 years ago (K: *kachcha*; P: *pakka*)

then he has started eating *kachcha* food cooked by the Thakur. But this is also an individual instance; otherwise, we are told, no Kurmi in any other village accepts *kachcha* food from the Thakur.

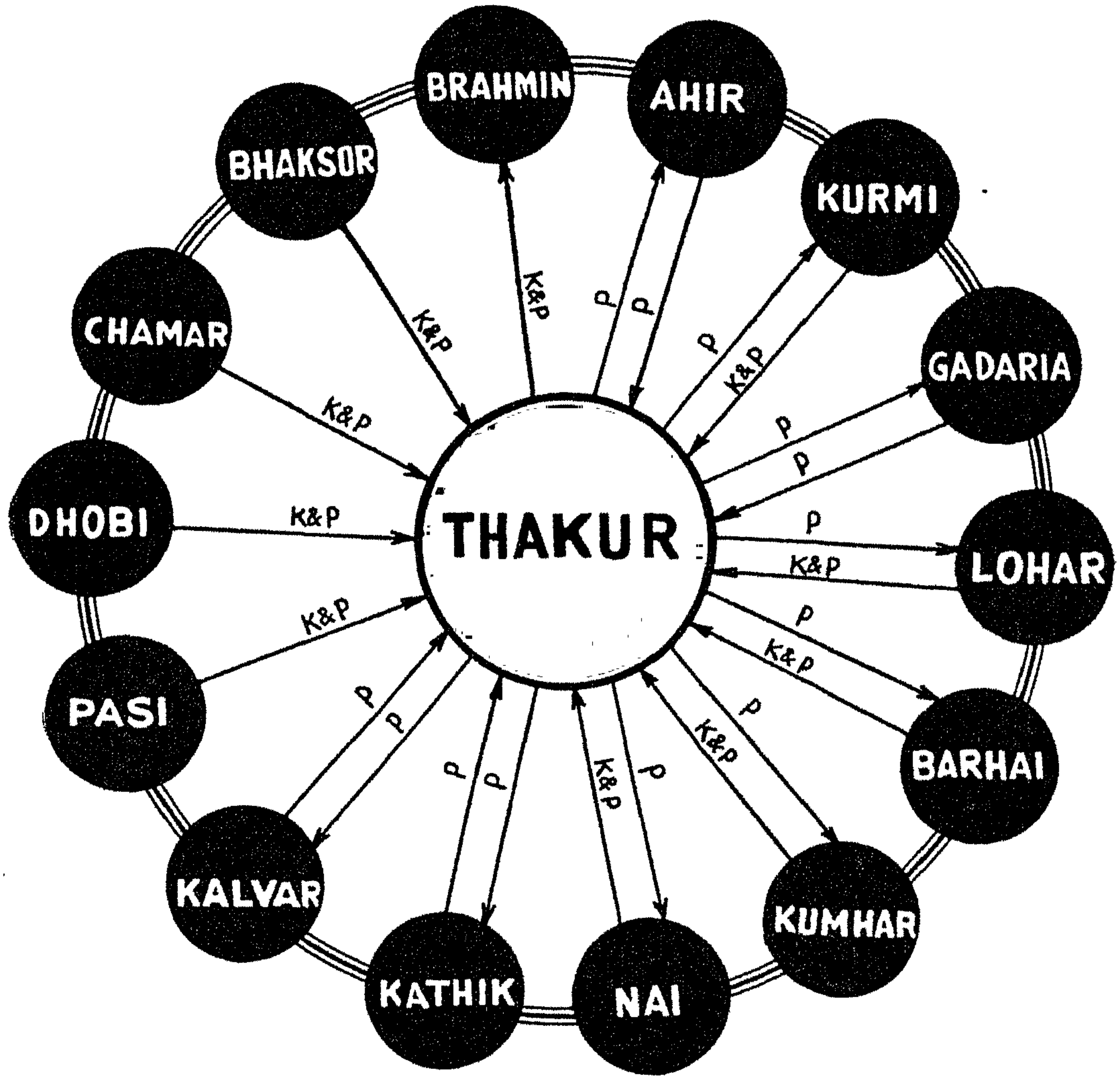
"In marriages," Junga Kurmi said, "Thakur and Kurmi sit side by side at the feast and there is no caste discrimination on this occasion." But the Thakur contradicted his statement and said that Kurmi and Thakur did not sit together in the feasts. The Kurmi are seated at a distance from the Thakur.

The Lohar participate in both *kachcha* and *pakka* feast at a Thakur's place. Parag Lohar says they take their food with the Thakur in the same line, without a sense of discrimination, and can accept food from the same person who serves the food to the Thakur. But Maharaj Singh said that Thakur and Lohar do not sit together at a feast but at a distance from each other, though the men who serve the food are the same. The Thakur accept *pakka* food and sweets from the Lohar. They may also accept water from the Lohar but not *kachcha* food. Maharaj Singh said that the Thakur and Lohar share their *chilam* and *bidi* with each other but not the *hookah*.

The Thakur consider the Kumhar to be a clean caste and can accept water from them. People from either caste can accept both *chilam* and *hookah* from the other. The Kumhar can accept both *kachcha* and *pakka* food from the Thakur. The Thakur used to provide the Kumhar with food for the latter's children after the feast was over. But, as Thakur Ram Pal Singh told us, the Kumhar now hesitate to carry the food home to their children. Instead, they demand the *seedha* from the Thakur, which they are sometimes given. In the past, Thakur never accepted any food from the Kumhar. But now it is not very certain that they do not accept *pakka* food from the Kumhar; *kachcha* food, of course, they still do not accept.

If there is a *pakki dawat* at a Thakur's place, the Nai and Nain both work there. The Nain helps in cooking the *pooris*. The Nain cannot, however, assist at a *kachchi dawat* because the Thakurs cannot eat *kachcha* food touched by a member of the Nai caste. The Nai serves only water and nothing else at a *kachchi dawat*. At a *pakki dawat* the Nai can serve *pooris*, vegetables and other things, besides water.

The food relations between the Pasi and the Thakur are the same today as they were about twenty-five years ago. The Pasi accept both *kachcha* and *pakka* food from the Thakur. The Pasi are the *goraits* of the Thakur. So whenever there is a feast at a Thakur's place, their *goraits* get a share in the food prepared for the feast. The Pasi do not take their food in the same line with the Thakur. They take it after the Thakur have finished eating. The Thakur have never accepted any kind of food from the Pasi—nor do they



SOCIOGRAM NO. 5 (B)
Food participation of different castes with the Thakur—1956
(K: *kachcha*; P: *pakka*)

do so now—not even water. It seems surprising that though people of both castes can smoke from the same *chilam*, yet they do not accept a *bidi* offered by the other caste men. In the *kathas* of Pasi the Thakur accept *prasad* only if it is distributed by a Brahmin.

Relations of Thakur with members of other lower castes too—Chamar, Bhaksor and Dhobi—have not changed at all, as Sociogram No. 5 shows. The Dhobi accept both *kachcha* and *pakka* food from the Thakur, though the latter do not even accept water from them. Thakur do not offer their *chilam* to a Dhobi. Thakur Nath Singh

said that if a Dhobi happened to smoke a Thakur's *chilam,* the latter would break it. A Dhobi cannot offer tobacco and betel to a Thakur. Nath Singh, however, said that these traditional regulations were not so rigid in practice as they used to be, and cited an instance of Thakur and Dhobi drinking liquor together. Thakur Singh is known to drink liquor with Faqire Dhobi and Kallo Chamar.

The Chamar are, all the time, forced to lead a life of humiliation and degradation. The Thakur do not accept water from them and offer them water not in their *bartans* but in the Chamar's cupped palms. Milk from the Chamar's goats can be taken by Thakur if the animals are milked by a Thakur. Chamar, who are considered the lowliest caste and regarded as untouchables, are not allowed to touch the utensils or the person of a Thakur. The same is the condition of Bhaksor. Even the shadow of these castes pollutes a member of the higher caste. Lakhai Chamar was once coming to the village with some tanned hides on the carrier of his bicycle. He had avoided passing through the village and had taken a longer route, outside the village. When near the village, he saw a person who seemed to be a Brahmin, and vigorously rang the cycle bell to announce himself. The Brahmin let him pass. But when he recognised that it was a Chamar, he began shouting at Lakhai. Two other high-caste passers-by stopped Lakhai. The Brahmin abused and hit Lakhai on the plea that the hides smelt and had polluted him. After a good beating, Lakhai was asked to be more careful in future and avoid the Brahmin on the streets by taking a different route.

The power that wealth and position give enable the Thakurs to meddle in the day-to-day affairs of the Chamar, and turn the helpless position of these people to their own advantage. The case of Kitab Chamar is a good illustration of this, and there are several other examples too, one of which is given here. Karan Chamar, the servant of Ram Singh, was residing in village Bilwa where he had intimate relations with a Pasi woman. The angry Pasi of Bilwa threatened to kill Karan. So he eloped with the woman to Mohana and there took refuge with Chitai Chamar who is married to his sister. The Pasi of Bilwa lodged a report with the police. In the mean time, the Pasi of Mohana came to know

of this and objected to Karan staying in Mohana. Karan refused to quit. So the Pasis surrounded the house in which Karan lived and threatened to burn it down. Baran Singh heard of this and rushed to the spot to save the Chamar. He pacified the Pasis and sent them away, but extracted some money from Karan saying that he would distribute it among the Pasis, to cool down their anger. A week later, police constables went to Mohana to recover the woman. Now, Jodh Singh stepped into the picture. He is said to have offered drinks to the police constables who left after receiving some consideration. He recovered the cost of the drinks and Rs. 50 from Karan. Karan had no money to give, and he has not been able to extricate himself from this debt, although the incident took place about seven years ago.

The Thakur are often high-handed in their attitude towards the Chamar who are helpless against them. To a certain extent the Chamar are themselves to be blamed for this state of affairs. Their rules and regulations concerning morality and good behaviour are very loose, and they often find themselves in troubled waters. Traditional custom permits influential Thakur to meddle in the affairs of Chamar in cases of illegal sexual intimacy, elopement, divorce etc. Thus the Chamar fall an easy prey into the greedy clutches of Thakur. Further, in the Chamar community there is lack of unity, and hence lack of strength to resist the Thakur.

Kallo Chamar had illicit relations with the wife of his brother Sukhan. The elder sister of Sukhan's wife came to know of this and passed on the information to her mother. When Sukhan's wife went to her parental home she was not allowed to return to her marital home. Jodh Singh promised to get Sukhan his wife, if Sukhan would pay money, but Sukhan was poor and expressed his inability to give any money to Jodh Singh. The disappointed Jodh Singh with a few others threatened Sukhan that they would have him and Kallo expelled from the community. Sukhan's poverty was such that he preferred to be an outcaste to recovering his wife and having to pay for it.

Once a Chamar becomes indebted to a Thakur, it is well nigh impossible for him to disentangle himself from his monetary troubles for, as if by magic, the sum borrowed never decreases, even though the debtor pays small amounts either regularly or irregularly.

Accounts are very cleverly made false, and the illiterate Chamar know nothing about it. Even if they detect the false note, they can do nothing about it, for it looks as though they are destined to be oppressed and downtrodden.

Ganbe Chamar was once indebted to Karan Singh and could not repay the debt. Consequently he was forced to work for his creditor. Once it so happened that when Karan's fields were being watered by the *beri* method, Ganbe's fields also needed water very badly. So Ganbe did not turn up to work the *beri* of Karan. Not long after this Karan met Ganbe at a meeting of the Gram Sabha and shouted at him for not having come to water his fields. No explanations on the part of Ganbe could excuse him. As a punishment Karan said that the rate of interest for the debt would be one anna per rupee, and not half anna as agreed earlier. Ganbe appealed to the members of the Gram Sabha to speak for him, but none of them wished to displease Karan by standing up for Ganbe Chamar.

On a *Nag Panchmi* day it was decided to have the usual wrestling bouts in front of the house of Bhagat Chamar. To prepare the wrestling field the soil has to be loosened and watered alternately four or five times, and finally levelled. Makhana Chamar was asked to dig up the soil for the second time. He refused saying that since he did not intend to participate in the bout he saw no reason why he should waste his energy in preparing the wrestling field. At this Jadhav Singh (Nath's son) slapped him. Makhana was adamant though he received persistent slaps and beatings from Jadhav. The Chamars of the village met together and decided not to cooperate with the Thakurs in the wrestling bouts. This decision of theirs brought Bir Singh and Nath Singh to the spot, who reprimanded and threatened the Chamars. Bir had a *lathi* with him. He pushed two or three of the Chamar boys towards the wrestling field and forced them to work there. The other Chamars did nothing.

Amidst such oppressive scenes it tickles one to laughter to know that the Thakur condemn one another for ill-treating the low-caste people, particularly in cases of debt. Each with a beam in his own eye tries to remove the mote from the eyes of his fellow caste-men.

Their humiliating and degrading status in the village society has made the Chamar carry the maximum social disabilities through the centuries. According to the traditional prescription they are born ritually 'impure' and 'unclean'. In the village they have always been treated as beasts of burden. They were very often taken on *begar* by the Thakur zamindars. Last year Karan Chamar was employed in digging a canal, earning about Rs. 2 a day, according to the amount of *mitti* (clay) he dug. Thakur Karan Singh took him forcibly to his house, made him work there the whole day and paid him only 50 nP. There was a similar instance of *begar* when Makhana Chamar was diverted from going to his work by Bir Singh, who asked him to cut the *bandh* (dam) at the tank. Makhana had to work at the tank without getting any wages for his labour. Apart from taking *begar*, the Thakur zamindars also take away the Chamars' vegetables either forcibly or surreptitiously.

But nowadays the Chamar have begun to resist a little. They will not do *begar* for anyone. They sometimes refuse even if wages are offered. Some of the Chamar are thinking of equality and assimilation with the higher castes. With this end in view, they have started trying various devices. For example, it has been seen that some of the numerically strong and otherwise asserting castes, in their efforts to bridge or narrow their social distance from the higher castes and to improve and raise their own social status, adopt exactly the same discriminatory measures against castes which are lower to them as the higher castes have been using against themselves. To quote an instance, Chamar—numerically the largest caste in the village, with 141 persons in all—who have hitherto been very ruthlessly exploited by the Thakur (who not only do not take any food, *kachcha* or *pakka*, but do not even take water from them, nor let them draw water from their wells, and take forcible *begar* from them, giving them the most humiliating position in the village) have, with a view to raising their own status, started taking the same superior attitude towards Dhobi and Bhaksor, whom the Chamar treat as inferiors. Chamar now refuse to take food with Dhobi and Bhaksor; they consider Bhaksor to be their *praja* and, therefore, accept neither food nor water from them. They have no *byohar* relations with Bhaksor; they do not

attend their funeral processions or other rites at *marghat*, or give *mitti* in case of death among Bhaksor. They would not sit in their house nor use the cots of Bhaksor. The Bhaksor certainly resent all this and often try to retaliate.

Now, according to the traditional caste hierarchy, prevailing social practice and the attitudes and relationship of higher castes toward them, the Dhobi are definitely a step above the Chamar in social status. But in their desperate efforts to raise their own status, Chamar try their best, if not to treat them as inferior in status, at least to consider Dhobi as equal to themselves on the caste and social ladder, as has been stated and illustrated earlier.

It is amazing to see this peculiar phenomenon of the caste dynamics among the lower castes. In trying to raise their own status, and asserting themselves in their bid to narrow down the gap with the higher castes, the lower (here, Chamar) castes maintain similar discriminatory barriers against those who are still lower to them in status (here, Bhaksor), and create barriers against those who are slightly superior to them (here, Dhobi).

Towards speeding up the social capillarity and raising their caste status and position, another general tendency among the lower castes has been to adopt the ways of the higher castes. Pasi, particularly, made a strong bid in this direction and though the first step was taken over fifteen years back, some time before or about the beginning of the Second World War, the issue came to a head five or six years back. This is known as the Pasi *janeu* case.

The attempt was first made some time in 1939 when one Ajodhya Prashad Pasi of Girdhar-ka-purwa, District Barabanki, wrote and published a pamphlet, claiming that the Pasi belonged to a high caste. They were the *sewak* of the *Jati* and trusted and close confidants of the Thakur. An appeal was made to the Pasi to live clean, to give up liquor and meat, to cultivate good habits, to educate their children and to live with unity. The pamphlet urged the Pasi to try to raise their social status; they should do no petty and humiliating work as they belonged to a clean caste. They should not accept *kachcha* food from the Thakur or from any other caste except the Brahmins. And, as a symbolic expression of their claim to superior position on the social scale, they were always to wear the *janeu* (the sacred thread).

The pamphlet was circulated in the neighbouring villages to arouse enthusiasm among the Pasi. But soon the Second World War broke out and the rigorous controls of the zamindari system curbed the movement. Round about 1949, when it came to be known that the zamindari system was soon to be abolished, the matter was once again taken up. A meeting of the Pasi community was called in Itaunja, in the neighbourhood of Mohana. Ajodhya Prasad Pasi, the author of the pamphlet published in 1939, addressed the meeting. Chheda, Autar Divan and Kali Din represented village Mohana at this meeting where the pamphlet was widely circulated. Some time later, another meeting was held in Mohana which the Pasi of eight or nine neighbouring villages attended. It was decided at the meeting that henceforth Pasi would not accept *kachcha* food from any of the higher castes except the Brahmins. Instead, they would accept only uncooked food or *seedha*, as the higher castes did. It was also decided that Pasi should start wearing the *janeu*, which was ceremonially done at the meeting.

When the Thakur heard of all these developments and of the Pasi's decision to refuse to accept *kachcha* food from them, they were infuriated, and, as a first step, they immediately forbade the Pasi from grazing their cattle in their (Thakur's) fields and pastures. Later, the Thakur called the village panchayat in Mohana, where they decided to boycott the Pasi in every possible way. They also forced the other castes socially to boycott the Pasi and refuse to have anything to do with them. As a consequence, even the Chamar, it is said, refused to carry the carcass of the cattle belonging to the Pasi. The Nai would not shave a Pasi; the Bhaksorin refused to attend to the Pasi women at child-birth. The Barhai and Lohar refused to provide the agricultural implements to the Pasi, who were thus faced with a complete social boycott by all the castes in the village.

Some time later, the Thakur stopped all grants given to the Pasi, and took back their gifts of *mafi* land (free land given them for cultivation). At this, viz., Thakur's taking back land from them, the Pasi reported the matter to the police and called a meeting of the Pasi. The police *Darogha* from the Kandion thana went to the meeting to prevent any breach of peace that

might arise there. The *Darogha* went to Mukhia Nath Singh to ask the Thakur to attend this meeting. Nath Singh said that since the Pasi would be sitting on *charpais* and *takhat*, the Thakur would be offended to sit with them. The Thakur would go only if the *Darogha* undertook the responsibility of making all the Pasi sit on the ground. And, as the *Darogha* found it difficult to undertake any such responsibility, the Thakur did not attend the meeting that had been called by the Pasi.

The meeting was held. Diwan Pasi, addressing the meeting, said: "If the Thakur do not want to see us wearing the *janeu*, let them shut their eyes." The Pasi appealed to the police to restore their land to them. The matter was investigated, but the police told the Pasi that the land legally belonged to the Thakur and hence the Pasi had no legal claim over it. The free grant of land depended solely on the pleasure of the Thakur and their confiscating the land was, therefore, justifiable. The police could not do anything for the Pasi in this matter. The other castes in the village had already sided with the Thakur; now law also was in their favour.

Soon after, the Thakur forbade the Pasi from irrigating their fields with *beri*. The Pasi were hit very hard, especially the poorer among them whose endurance was fast thinning down, and who had already started thinking in terms of giving in to the Thakur. Shambhar and Iswar, two among the poorer Pasi of the village, urged the rest to end their strike and compromise with the Thakur. The better-off among them, however, wanted to hold on. But the rift had set in, and it was now only a question of time. The Thakur knew that the Pasi could not remain adamant for long and would have to bow before them. The Thakur ultimately won and by the end of the year, the Pasi had given up the wearing of *janeu*.

The first major effect of a lower caste to raise itself on the caste and social hierarchy thus failed but the episode is still remembered in Mohana.

Children. A question that would naturally arise in the mind of the reader is whether these social distinctions are observed among the children also. As far as eating and drinking go the restrictions are the same with them; otherwise there is free mixing of the children of all castes, for children are children, and they love to

romp and play together, no matter to which caste they belong. But if while playing a quarrel were to arise (sure enough it does happen often) and it is taken up by the guardians of the children, then the atmosphere changes, for it is no longer a quarrel of the children but becomes a quarrel of caste-conscious elders, and the lower castes are sure to get the worst of it. Some of the lower-caste people are of the opinion that Thakur and Brahmin do not like their children to play with those of the other castes, but cannot stop them from doing so. In the school, children of all castes sit together on the same benches.

However, there has been observed one point where caste distinction is prevalent even among the children, particularly among the older ones. The children of the higher castes crack dirty jokes about the mothers and sisters of their play-fellows from the lower castes, but the latter never retaliate in the same manner, for fear of serious consequences.

A difference seen between the low caste and high caste children is that the former are more independent than the latter. This is because very early in life a low caste child has to look after himself. The mother goes to the field to work and leaves him at home, so he is not very much attached to the mother. Further, he cannot afford to have all the comforts that a high caste child has. He has to fight his way through life and the adversities he encounters make him stronger and more independent. So a high caste child sits at home surrounded with luxuries while a low caste child has to work even for the bare necessities of life. Thus it is seen that the low caste boy receives a better training for life than the high caste boy, but the latter has his wealth and social prestige to succour him. In the school, it is seen that the low caste boys are more competent because they are hard-working. There are many Thakur and Ahir boys who are 'professional dunces'. Most of the high caste boys do not care to go to school. Why should they have to worry and rack their brains, when they do not have to earn a living? The low caste children, though intelligent and hard-working, suffer from an inferiority complex, and though they play with the high caste children, a gulf exists between the two groups.

Dress habits of the high and low castes. Before the zamindari abo-

lition, the Thakur laid certain restrictions on the low caste people in the matter of dress. They could wear *dhotis* which would reach only up to their knees. These *dhotis* were to be made of coarse cloth and have no borders. The upper garment was the *salooka* (half-sleeved blouse). Shirts could not be worn. They were not allowed to use caps, shoes or umbrellas. They could not grow their hair or moustache. The women of the lower castes could not put on gold or silver ornaments, and could not wear *saris*. They would wear only a blouse and a *lehnga* (a full-pleated skirt). If the lower caste people wished to use any of the prohibited articles of dress, they could do so only outside the village. Once a Chamar was carrying an umbrella. Seeing this Bir Singh snatched the umbrella from him and would not allow him to use it. These restrictions were not extended to the Pasi and the Nai, even though they also belong to the lower strata of the society. On the other hand, on ceremonial occasions Thakur present the Nai and the Pasi with certain articles of dress which the other lower caste people cannot wear.

The zamindari abolition improved the economic condition of some of the lower castes such as the Kumhar who with impunity violated the man-made rules about what to put on and what not to put on. But others like the Chamar found that after the zamindari abolition, the grip of poverty had tightened on them, and so they still had to manage with coarse, short *dhotis*. But the Thakur's hold on them was loosened and so they now began to grow long hair and long moustaches. At present any difference in dress is not due to caste distinction, but is an outcome of unequal division of wealth among the villagers. However, some are of the opinion that when the lower caste people put on good dresses, the Thakur look with disapproval on them. The Thakur on the other hand put on whatever dress they like and their women have a good number of gold and silver ornaments.

Food Habits. All villagers, including children, have three meals a day—morning, noon and night—but the food of different castes differs in quantity and quality. Meat and milk products and fruits are used only by a few of the higher caste people. The morning meal consists of *roti* and vegetables cooked the previous night. Midday meal is taken at about 1 or 2 o'clock and consists

of rice, *roti* and *dal.* Vegetables are had if available and can be afforded. The third meal is taken at 10 o'clock in the night and is of the same type as the midday meal. Of course some of the high caste people can and do take richer and better food. The low caste people use inferior kind of rice known as *sawan* and they prepare *roti* out of the flour of coarse grains such as maize. Even *dal* they have only now and then, and generally take the *roti* with salt or *chatni* (home-made sauce). It is clear that the low caste people are under-nourished and their children are seen with distended abdomens, indicating thereby that they are suffering from enlarged livers.

The opinion of the villagers on the caste system. The caste system, according to many, is God-ordained, and as such no man has any power to destroy it. Even among the lower castes who have been and still are harassed and ill-treated, the opinion is that their economic condition should be bettered, but the caste system should not be done away with. However, there are a few even among the higher castes who think that all this talk about distinctions in birth is mere nonsense. The people have learnt that the Government is planning shortly to open a hostel in the village, where people of all castes would be able to take their meals. This is with a view to ending caste distinctions. There is also some talk about legislation being introduced for the treatment of all people alike. Most of the villagers are not in favour of interference in this respect by the Government. They feel it has no right to meddle in the affairs of God. On the whole Brahmin, Thakur, Kurmi, Kumhar, Lohar, Gadaria, do not approve of these Government schemes. Then there are a few castes like the Pasi who though they are not in favour of the caste system, calmly resign themselves to their position, saying that conditions cannot be changed as the hand of God has wrought the caste patterns. In the Chamar community there are two sections—one emboldened enough to court the wrath of the Thakur, claiming better treatment for their community, and the other thrown on the defensive by circumstances, pleading avoidance of trouble with Thakur at any cost. The first section consists of young men who are not in the service of the Thakur, and in the second group are those of the older generation who are employed by the Thakur. There is no hard

and fast line drawn between these groups, for there are young Chamar in the first group and old ones in the second. The Chamar are the most exploited group, and the general opinion in the village is that they should receive better treatment at the hands of Thakur. Though some of the Chamar do not openly claim equality with the other castes, they all realise the tyranny of the caste system. The demand, therefore, of the more vociferous section of the community for a separate *shivala* (temple of Shiva) in the Chamar locality is supported by all of them. Their claims are that either they should be permitted to draw water from all the wells of the village and be allowed to enter the *shivala*, or they should have separate wells and a separate *shivala* in the Chamar locality, which should not be used by any other castes.

Pitiable as is their condition, the Chamar can also be arrogant. Perhaps it is arrogance born out of humiliation, for if they are looked down upon by others, they have a malicious pleasure in regarding some others as inferior to them. For instance, they oppose the Government's plan to open a common hostel in the village. If such a hostel were opened, the Dhobi and Bhaksor would eat there, and how could a Chamar sit with these low caste people and take his food ? Quite a long way to go for the fulfilling of the golden rule, viz., "Do unto others as ye would that they should do unto you!" Further, the Chamar will never accept food or water from the Kumhar. The reason for this is interesting. The Kumhar, while making pots, first place clay on the wheel and shape it to a figure which resembles the *Shiva-linga* (Phallus of Lord Shiva which is worshipped). In the process of making the pot this clay (in the shape of the *Shiva-linga*) is again and again cut by the thread. This is regarded as desecrating the *Shiva-linga*. So it would be blasphemous to accept food and water from the Kumhar. Some of the other castes also do not accept food and water from the Kumhar for this reason. However, the blasphemy does not extend to the using of the pots made in that way. The Gausai Chamar are looked down upon by the other Chamars.

Transitional stage. Though the caste system is regarded as a divine institution, it is apparent that its hold on the village has weakened to a certain extent. The zamindari abolition has had a great deal to do with the weakening of age-long traditions and

caste barriers. In zamindari times, Thakurs were land-owners and the lower castes were tenant-cultivators. But when Bhumidhar rights were given, the tiller became the owner. This has raised the economic condition of some of the lower castes. With lands and money at their command they can now turn a deaf ear to the orders of the Thakur. There is no fear of being evicted from the land. Hence the Thakur do not now enjoy the privileges they enjoyed before. They complain that the low caste people have become impertinent and arrogant in their behaviour.

The Kumhar community is one which gained much by the zamindari abolition, and their newly-won independence is expressed in the change in their attitude towards the Thakur and towards the other castes also. There is only one Kumhar who has stuck to his caste profession, all others having taken to agriculture, and being conscious that his services are indispensable to the villagers, he puts on airs. Previously, the Thakur used to order the Kumhar to supply them with vessels, but now no such orders are obeyed, though requests are complied with, and when vessels are supplied, immediate payment is demanded, particularly from the Thakur.

The other lower castes, chiefly the Nai, are very happy about the changed behaviour of the Kumhar, for now that they have taken the lead in resisting the Thakur, others are sure to toe their line. The Nai now refuse to do menial work for the Thakurs. The Nai call themselves the Nai-Thakur, denoting thereby that they are equal to the Thakur in status. To support their claim they relate a story that once seven men, all of different castes, travelled together. The group included a Thakur and a Nai also. As they passed through a wilderness they met a woman and made her their common wife, by which act all seven of them agreed that they were equal in status. It is not known which other castes were represented in that group, and no other caste claims equality with the Thakur on the strength of this story.

Even Chamar, the down-trodden and over-burdened community, have summoned enough courage to flatly disobey the Thakur. Sometimes the Chamar flatly refuse to work even when money is offered, but this is not often, for the Chamar are always in need of money. One day Makhana Chamar touched a water-bucket be-

longing to the family of Nath Singh. This was a violation of caste traditions, even though Makhana Chamar was a friend of that family. Sukhraj Singh, another Thakur, saw him touch the bucket and severely reprimanded him. Makhana Chamar took the matter very lightly. Even though later he got a Nai to clean the bucket, still he did not feel that he had done anything wrong, for all the while that Sukhraj Singh rebuked him, he kept on smiling and offered no excuse or apology.

Another factor in the reduction of social distance between castes is the influence of urban life. In the cities when people have their food at a restaurant they have to lay aside all scruples about eating with the lower caste people and accepting food from them. Many of the villagers often go to Lucknow, and there they have to follow the ways of city life. Food and water restrictions have to be overlooked. If they could do so in the city, there should be no harm if they did it in the village also. A logical argument, and one that has been put into practice even by the village Pandit! During the war, the Pandit was a compounder in the army, and in that capacity has been to many places in India and Burma. He often used to take tea with an American scholar, but to preserve the dignity of his office he does not take water or food from some of the lower castes such as the Chamar. Several Thakur men take wine at the wine shops of Lucknow and Kandion with members of the lower castes. They go to hotels and restaurants managed by anyone, even by those of other religions.

The lower caste people were by their leaders urged on to rise on the social ladder. Encouragement was given to them by the change in economic conditions due to Government interference. They are further encouraged by contacts with urban life. Present-day conditions seem to move forward to a fusion of all castes or at least an equal status for all. But this forward march is by no means an unhampered one, for the dying convention is fighting tooth and nail for its existence. The Thakur, and for that matter all the higher caste people, are desparately trying to maintain their hold on the 'depressed' classes, and to preserve the traditional social distances. This is seen in the following instances.

In the Pasian *Tola* live Lohar, Kumhar and Gadaria along with the Pasi. One day Ram Gadaria's daughter was drawing water

from the well in that *tola,* when a Pasi inadvertently dropped his bucket into the well. The Gadaria girl shouted out that the Pasi dropped his bucket into the well, when her bucket was also inside and thus her bucket was polluted. So the Gadaria assembled there and abused the Pasi, saying that they should be given the first preference.

Bir Singh wanted some work to be done by a Kumhar. He went to a Kumhar, but he refused to do it. Bir approached all the Kumhar of the village, but none of them were willing to do the work for him. The enraged Bir Singh stood at the cross-roads wielding a *lathi* in his hand saying that he would kill any low caste men who passed that way. The low caste people were terrified since they were well acquainted with the intemperate nature of Bir Singh. So the Kumhar and the Chamar went in a group and begged pardon of him, but Bir cared little for their apology. He was pacified only after his work was done.

Once a Kurmi of a neighbouring village came to Mohana. He felt thirsty and seeing a well wished to quench his thirst with its waters. But at that time he saw a Chamar drawing water from that well. So he went away without quenching his thirst at the well.

Thus the struggle is still on between the high castes and low castes, with the former desperately trying to maintain their hold on the lower caste people, and the latter, in the face of many a defeat, fighting equally for their rights and privileges.

Age and sex distinctions. It goes without saying that age expects and does receive more respect than youth, both among men and women. But this does not create an inaccessible barrier between them. On the other hand, old and young, and even children for that matter, move very freely with one another. They sit and talk, joke and laugh together. Sometimes this is taken to an extreme and old people talk on topics like sex, marriage, and illegitimate unions in the presence of children.

On the whole women are considered inferior to men, but there are exceptions, where a man and his wife enjoy equal status, and sometimes a woman enjoys even a higher status than her husband. Age gives much respect to a woman, and even the head of a family, if he happens to be younger than a woman in the family, cannot overlook her wishes in many cases. The opinion of old women is generally accepted in all matters affecting the family.

5. Group Formation and Centres of Authority

ONE IMPORTANT item of the present village investigation was a study of the structure and function of groups, which would include a study of the centres of authority and leadership. A study of enduring and inclusive social groups has its importance not only in understanding and predicting the behaviour of its units, but also because such a structural analysis, combined with a functional study, gives some idea of the nature of the members' goals and the range of their behaviour possibilities. The size and character of the group may vary, but the manner in which the group behaviour occurs, or the study of group dynamics, throws much light on the form and the process of the community of which the group forms a part.

Our tentative hypothesis here was that in a rural, mainly agricultural, community, kinship still remains the main basis of group formation, and that group formations, made on this basis, are generally enduring over a long period of time. Our scheme was to make an intensive study of group dynamics of one caste each in the top, the intermediate and the lower tier of the trichotomic scale of the village social organisation, and to check the validity of the initial hypothesis and to see whether or not there are any other trends in this field. The present inquiry includes the intra-caste study of one caste from the top tier of the village social structure—i.e., the Thakur group.

Of the twenty-two Thakur families of Mohana, 20 are from one *Khandan*. Tracing the history of this group, it was found that about fifteen years ago this *Khandan* was divided into two groups. Table X shows these two groups and some data on their respective strength.

A detailed study of both groups and their supporters showed that the latter consisted of the families of brothers, their fathers'

brothers, and of fathers' brothers' sons. In both cases, as Sociogram No. 6 shows, the foci of authority are single-centered, and following direct and unqualified support, result in 'intensive' groupings, making the leadership both powerful and popular.

The basis of group formation even today is the same. Kinship still remains the criterion of support, but the internal structures of the groups and the foci of authority have altered, as Sociogram No. 7 shows.

Table X

MAIN GROUPS AMONG THAKURS—ABOUT 15 YEARS BACK

Group	*Number of member families*	*Number of members of supporting families*	*Number of adult male members*
A	9	65	23
B	7	48	15

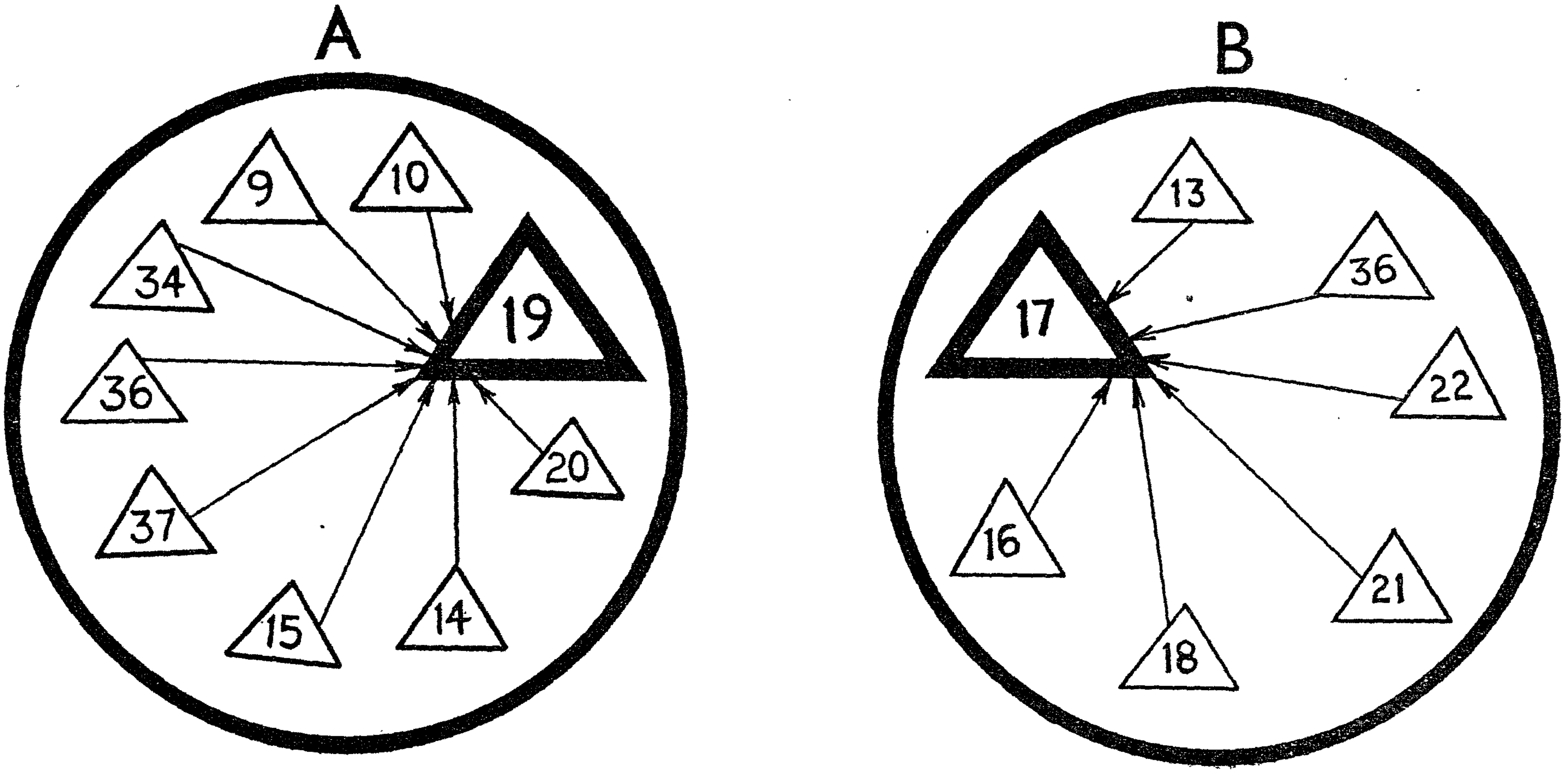
Table XI

GROUPS AMONG THAKURS—1955

Group	*Number of member families*	*Number of members of supporting families*	*Number of adult male members*
A^1	7	43	17
A (without A^1)	3	22	6
B	5	34	9
C	3	14	7

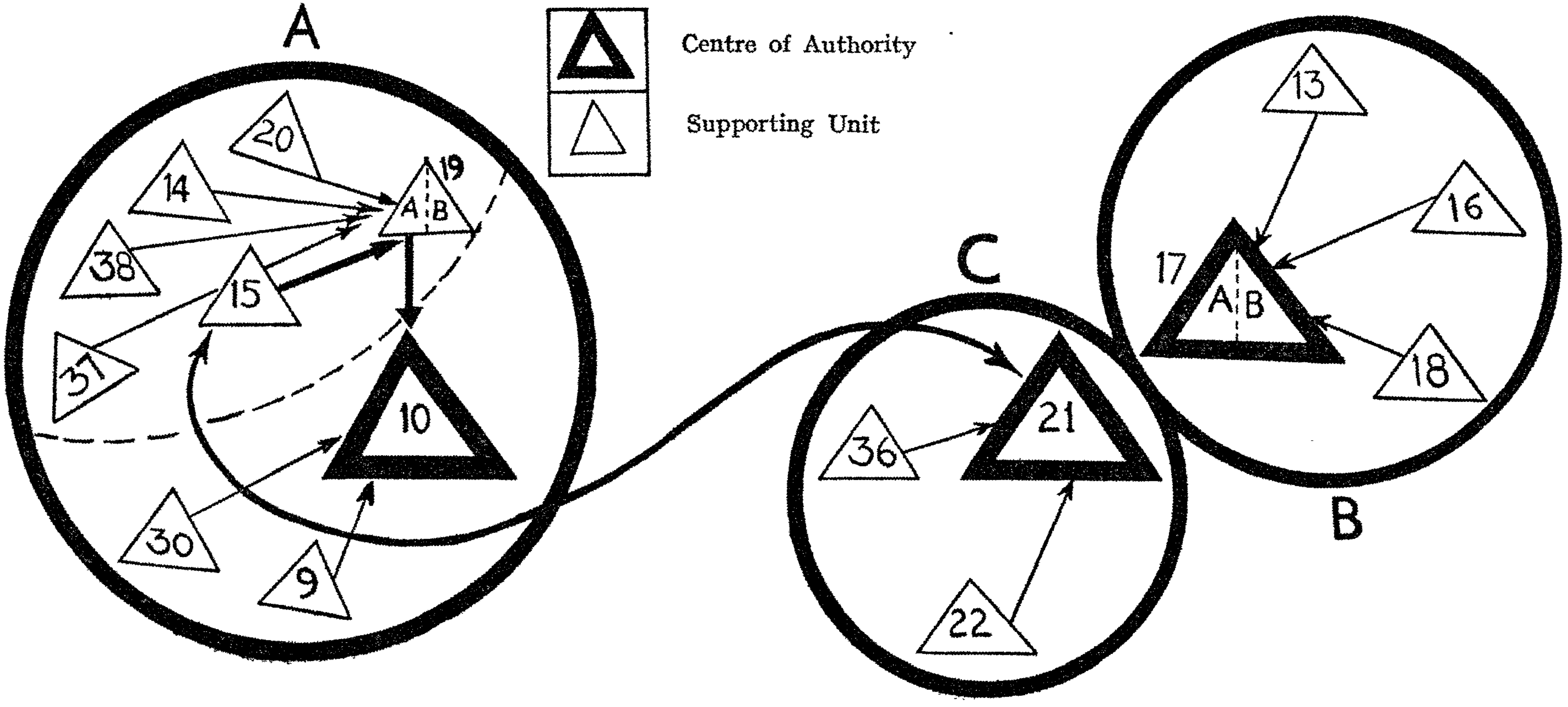
Sociogram No. 6

Pattern of group alignments among Thakurs—about 15 years ago



SOCIOGRAM No. 7

Pattern of group alignments among Thakurs—1956



As Table XI and Sociogram No. 7 show, there are now three different groups, with one group having a sub-group within its orbit. A simultaneous fission and fusion phenomena in the former groups, A and B, has not only altered the number of groups, but has also affected their structural designs, changing the type and position of leadership.

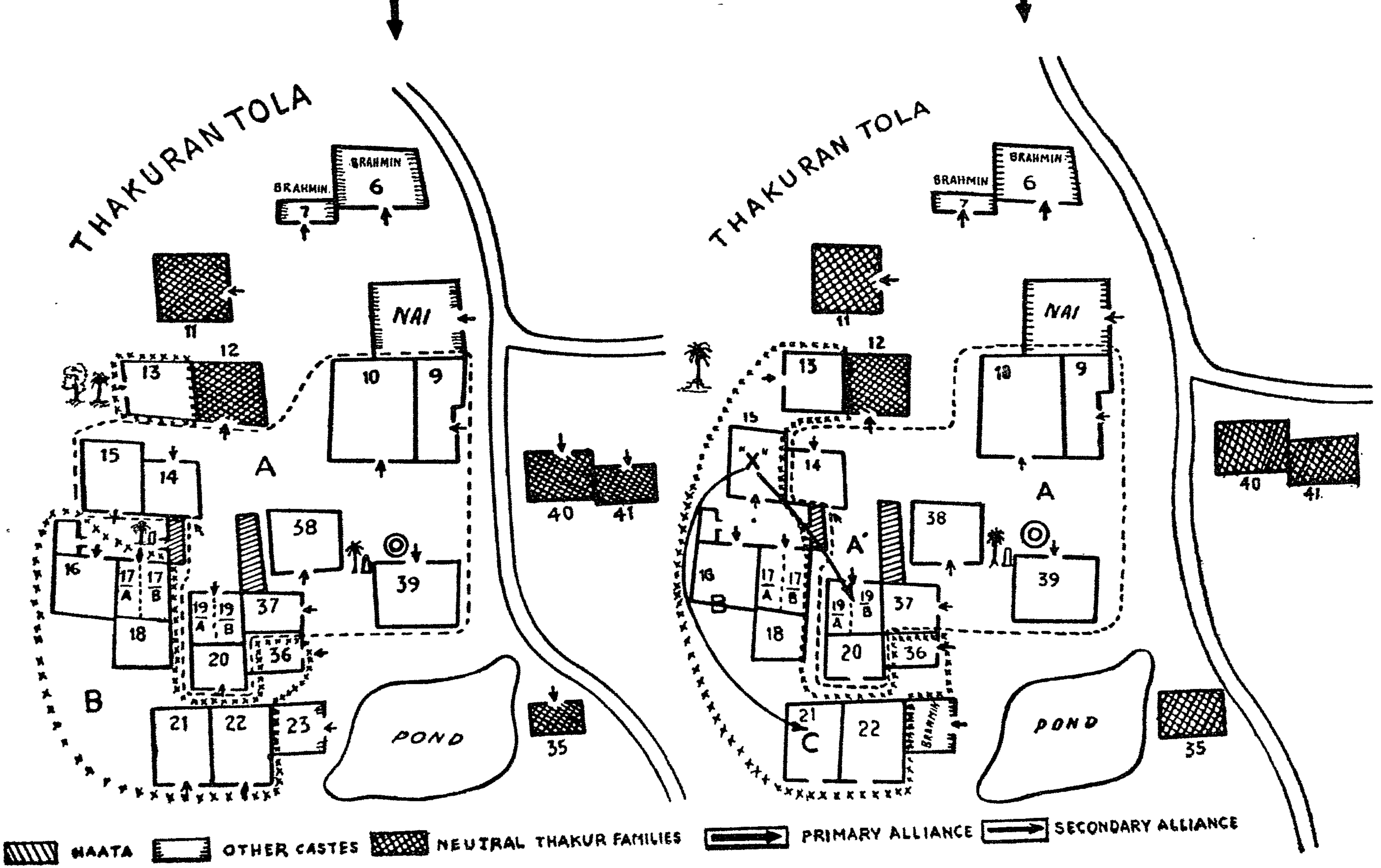
A split in group B has turned the former single centre of authority into two distinct foci of leadership. Though these separatist tendencies have found a foothold in the Thakur caste and in general day-to-day affairs the two groups work as independent entities, yet the hold of kinship has not disappeared. The leaders of these two groups are closely related—relationship being that of uncle and nephew—and in case of conflict with any outside group, in its own caste or outside, or outside the village, they join hands. And, therefore, the bifurcation of authority and split in the supporter units have not meant any decline in the group's power or position.

In group A, the split is not so sharp but there has been a definite shift in the locale of leadership. The former group leader still has the direct support of five units, but he himself acknowledges —as, through him, his supporters do—the leadership of a new unit, which has now ascended into prominence and power. The new leader's support is, thus, indirect and hence uncertain and weak. In case of any dispute between him and his sub-group (A), the new group leader's position would be precarious. But in this particular instance, he (the leader of A′ and A) happens to be a man of wealth, having support among Thakurs of neighbouring villages, and also among some other castes of his own village, which makes up for any possible leakage of power due to internal fission. But no instance of any conflict within this group has come to our notice, and the group has remained united and powerful.

One point of interest is noticed in the position of unit 'X'. This unit is related to the leader of former group A and now sub-group A′ through ties of kinship. He, therefore, follows his group leader. But of late his occupation ties have become stronger with the new group C, to whom he often gives support. In case of conflict between group C and any other group, he supports C. But still if there be any clash between A′ and C, he will support his kinsmen.

GROUPS AMONG THAKURS 15 YEARS AGO

GROUPS AMONG THAKURS IN 1955



Change in 'X's' allegiance is noticed when there is any difference of opinion between C and A′; though the latter has the support of A′, and through him, his supporters, 'X' in such a situation sides with C. 'X's' primary support to A′ is only for A′, not, through him, for A.

Thus, the group formation is still on the basis of kinship. Tendencies towards division, however, have started, as also instances of support, though still secondary, on the basis of interest. The new direction of authority is not always direct, nor are the groups so 'intensive' as they used to be.

6. Panchayat and Leadership Pattern

POPULAR LEGEND has it that when the goddess *Sati* heroically burnt herself on the funeral pyre of her husband, she blessed the village that it would be free from bitter strifes and contentions. Whether it be due to the blessing of the goddess (the villagers believe so), or the nature of the villagers of Mohana, they have so far not been in the throes of any cold-blooded murders. Serious conflicts and criminal cases are few. But human nature is never without its flaws. Jealousy, covetousness, wantonness—these are inveterate sins, and so naturally heated arguments and threats, quarrels and fights disturb the usually calm atmosphere of the village. To deal with such cases there is working in the village a judicial system. The judicial bodies known as panchayats are endowed with much power and run by elected officials.

A study of the judicial system of the village reveals that every caste has its own panchayat, or *biradari*, though this is not as fully recognised among the high castes as it is among the lower castes. The area under the jurisdiction of a *biradari* is known as *javar* and several villages are included in one *javar*. All the caste-panchayats are more or less similar in structure and in the powers they wield.

The head of a caste-panchayat is generally known as the *chowdhry* but among the Pasi he is called *rant* and among the Ahirs *mahton*. The office of *chowdhry* is hereditary, and on the death of a *chowdhry* his eldest son normally succeeds him. If the eldest son, due to physical or mental infirmity or any other reason, is not fit for the office, it passes on to the next son. If the *chowdhry* has no male issue, his nearest male relative takes up the office. Even after appointment, a *chowdhry* may forfeit his job, if found unfit for or unworthy of his high calling. The *chowdhry* calls and presides over the panchayat meetings. If for some unavoidable reason he cannot take the chair, he deputes someone else to do so.

When a meeting is to be held, a member announces the time and place for it, at any gathering, or a Nai is sent round with the message. In former days the Nai used to get 2 nP from every family. But now instead of 2 nP from each family he gets one *seedha* and 31 nP from the person at whose request the panchayat is to be held. The *chowdhry* fixes the time and place of meetings.

The meetings are generally held in the evening, so that all the members can attend them. The cases taken up by the caste-panchayat deal with irregular unions, illegal sexual intimacy, family quarrels, disputes over land affairs, and any other incidents which would lower the reputation of the whole caste. As a rule, the meetings are held in the village of the person chiefly involved in the case. Sometimes they are held in other villages, particularly the village in which the *chowdhry* resides. The person, when proved guilty, is no longer regarded as a member of the caste, but he can retrieve his lost position by paying the fine imposed on him by the panchayat. The punishment varies according to the nature of the crime. Often the offender has to arrange a feast for his fellow caste-men, the number of people asked for the feast again depending on the nature of the crime.

A man who for some reason or other has been imprisoned is also treated as an outcaste, for a prisoner is a blot on the name and fame of the caste, and on his release from prison must pay a fine or arrange a feast as the case may be, to reinstate himself in his community. An outcaste, before he can be readmitted into his caste, is boycotted by all his people. He cannot drink water from their *lotas* or share their *chilams*. These restrictions extend to the members of his family also, and if any man treats an outcaste as a friend, he must also of necessity be expelled from the caste. Even if a person gives food or water to an outcaste, or invites him for a smoke, without knowing the stigma attached to the recipient of his kindness, the unwitting offender also relinquishes his membership in the caste. What is more, this rule holds good even when the outcaste guest is from another village. An instance of this occurred in May 1954, when K-Chamar of Bijapur village visited B-Chamar of Mohana. K-Chamar had been, for some reason or other, expelled from his caste by the Chamar *biradari* of Bijapur. He came to Mohana without letting anyone know of the

disgrace, and B-Chamar as is the custom treated his guest very hospitably, and they took their midday meals together. Soon it was known that K-Chamar was an outcaste. Consequently B-Chamar was declared an outcaste by the Chamar caste-panchayat of Mohana. Thus sometimes decisions of the caste-panchayats are high-handed.

The judgment of a caste-panchayat is normally binding, and great is the respect paid to this judiciary board, especially to its head. But authority, however highly sanctified, is questioned and challenged at one time or another. Thus the halo around the *chowdhry's* head has grown dim. The judgments pronounced by him, with the backing of the panchayat, are not always accepted. Fines and punishments are sometimes ignored and the rules and regulations laid down by the *biradari* are violated. One does not hesitate much to commit shameless deeds, for, what matter if one's prestige is lost? It can be redeemed by a feast. However, caste-panchayats have not completely lost their power and among the people there still lingers a fear of heavy fines and large gatherings for feasts. The above account treats of all the caste-panchayats in general, and now it might be useful to know something more about each *biradari*.

Ahir caste-panchayat. The Ahir of this village are split into two groups and so there are two Ahir panchayats. Formerly the Ahir were united and had one panchayat. Then two groups came into existence, which after a time came together and had one panchayat. The present two groups were formed about four years ago. Even now the two groups are not at enmity with each other, and there is every hope that ere long they may be amalgamated.

One panchayat has in its *javar* the following villages:

1. Mohana (a part of it)
2. Misripur
3. Garhi
4. Adhar Khera
5. Ulrapur
6. Chetan Purwa

The *javar* of the other panchayat includes:

1. Mohana (a part of it)
2. Amarpur
3. Tiwaripur
4. Kutwa

All the Ahir of Mohana are members of one or the other of these two panchayats. Every *panch* or member is supposed to attend the meetings, but this is not always possible due to the difficulties of going from one village to another. So the general practice is that all the men of the village in which the panchayat is held and only the important members from the other villages attend the meeting. An amusing feature of this caste-panchayat is that meetings are held in the morning and they are always preceded by a *kachcha* feast served the night before. The *panch* from villages other than the one in which the meeting is held are anxious to get back home soon to start the day's work, so they attend the feast, but not the meeting.

Pasi caste-panchayat. The Pasis again do not come under one panchayat. They have quarrelled among themselves to such an extent that sometimes a single family forms a panchayat, while there are two families which do not come under any panchayat. The Pasi panchayats are summoned to try very minor cases, such as when a man is seen talking to a woman in a lonely place, so that serious trouble is prevented.

Nai caste-panchayat. The *javar* of the Nai caste panchayat is very extensive and includes 50-60 villages, some of which are: Mohana, Mirzapur, Kutwa, Nagnaman, Misripur, Asti, Sheogarh, Sarhaman, Krishanpur, Rampur, Shampur, and Bhauli. This panchayat does not meet very often. The following incident shows how loose a hold this panchayat has on its members. G-Nai for some time worked for a foreign research scholar. The caste-panchayat accused G-Nai of serving a foreigner whose caste was unknown and so G-Nai was expelled from the caste. But G-Nai did not mind it in the least, for he had friends among the high caste people. Just before the foreign scholar left the village, he arranged to distribute *prasad* to all the villagers, and G-Nai was asked to distribute it. Some of the Nais hesitated to accept it, not because it was given by a foreigner whose caste was unknown, but because they had to accept it from a person who had been expelled from their own community. But G-Nai had a strong point in his favour, for even the wealthy Thakurs and the priestly Brahmins had accepted the *prasad*, and "now," he asked, "why should the Nais hesitate to accept it ?" Finally they did receive the *prasad* from his hands,

and perhaps there was no more ado about G-Nai being an outcaste.

Dhobi caste-panchayat. Formerly all the seven households of the Dhobis of this village came under one panchayat, but persistent quarrels led to the formation of three panchayats. The *javar* of the first panchayat includes:

1. Seo Kusmi ka Purwa	3. Bhagat Purwa
2. Radauli	4. Agasar
5. Sewan	

The *javar* of the second panchayat is not so extensive and includes only a part of Mohana, Asti and Bhakaman.

The jurisdiction of the third panchayat is over four villages:

1. Kutna	3. Kandion
2. Tiwaripur	4. A part of Mohana

The Dhobi panchayat is very strict in meting out judgments. No one is given the benefit of doubt and sometimes even innocent people are punished. The following is an incident in which the sinner escaped the clutches of the panchayat, but the one against whom he sinned and her family bore the punishment. About five years ago, the wife of D-Dhobi was alone in her house. At night someone wishing to have sexual intimacy with her jumped into the room in which she slept. On sensing the touch of a stranger, she raised a cry of alarm. The culprit took to his heels. When the news reached the ears of D-Dhobi, he arranged for a meeting of the panchayat. The woman related what happened and was declared innocent by all the *panch*. However the woman in all her innocence was polluted by the mere touch of a man with evil intentions. Hence she could no longer belong to the caste, and D-Dhobi had to arrange a feast for the *biradari* to recover the lost honour of his wife. No one knew who the culprit was. Thus the innocent was punished while the guilty escaped.

Lohar caste-panchayat. The Lohar caste-panchayat exercises its authority over about 60 or 70 villages. Of these 60 or 70 villages, eight stand out in greater significance than the others; they are Mohana, Adhar Ker, Achranam, Kutna, Marua, Rasulpur,

Avari and Balroi Gaon. Only the *panch* from these eight villages have to attend all the panchayat meetings, and only if the meeting is very important are the *panch* from the other villages requested to attend it.

In spite of the extensive *javar* of the Lohar *biradari*, meetings are held very seldom. This is so for the following reasons:

1. The Lohar are in a minority in every village. There is only one Lohar family in Mohana, and in some of the neighbouring villages there are no Lohar at all. Being few in number they are united, and do not bother themselves about the affairs of the other caste-people.
2. A Lohar's life is a busy one. He has always to be at his post of duty, so he has no time for quarrels and litigations. There is also no time to attend meetings.
3. On account of his profession a Lohar is indispensable to all agriculturists, whether of high birth or low birth. So the other caste-people do not cause much trouble to the Lohar.

However, even for a Lohar, life cannot be fully free from hot words and bickerings, but to calm and settle these no great legal knowledge is needed. In minor quarrels, the parties concerned try their best to come to terms with each other. The heads of families are the peace-makers, and if the worst comes to the worst, there are the Thakurs to act as judges. But serious quarrels are generally avoided. Hence, unlike the other caste panchayats, the Lohar *biradari* is not a very active judiciary board.

Kumhar caste-panchayat. Formerly the Kumhar panchayat had a vast *javar* consisting of about 50–60 villages. Then since the *javar* was too extensive, it was split up into two or three panchayats. The panchayat to which the Kumhars of Mohana belonged had T-Kumhar of Mirzapur as the *chowdhry*. Fifteen or sixteen years ago, there cropped up some trouble between the *chowdhry* and the Kumhars of Mohana, following which the Kumhars of Mohana refused to recognise him as their *chowdhry*. So they dissociated themselves from that panchayat. Since then, they do not come under any panchayat, but settle their disputes among themselves.

Barhai caste-panchayat. The Barhai caste-panchayat has 30-35

villages in its *javar*, some of which are Mohana, Jutna, Tiwaripur, Amarpur, Chin Hat, Raj Hat, and Nathirpur. There are about a hundred Barhai families in these 30–35 villages. Since it is not possible for all the members to attend the meetings, seven members are elected to be present at all meetings. When the panchayat is held in a certain village these seven members and the Barhais of that village attend it. Now and then, when a general panchayat is held, all the members of the *javar* are informed and requested to attend the meeting.

Chamar caste-panchayat. The *javar* of this panchayat includes the following five villages: Mohana, Amarpur, Bijapur, Jhalva and Balak. These five villages are situated close together—within a radius of three miles. There are 12 members elected to attend all the meetings, but practically all the members attend the meetings as they do not have to cover a long distance. Though there is an elected *chowdhry*, there are at least three others (from among the 12 elected members) who frequently officiate as panchayat-heads. But there exists no ill feeling among them. It appears to be a mutual arrangement. Sometimes, the Chamar panchayat meetings are held soon after feasts, marriages or any other ceremonial gatherings at which most of the members would be present.

The Nai does not act as messenger for the Chamars. So when the panchayat is to meet the man involved in the case takes the information to all the members. Formerly the information was taken round by the *chowdhry*.

Gram Sabhas. Since 1952, the various caste-panchayats have not had the necessity to meet often, for in that year the village panchayats, commonly known as Gram Sabhas, came into existence. Mohana is in the jurisdiction of 'Gram Sabha Amarpur'. Generally a Gram Sabha is formed in a village having a population of not less than one thousand, and where such a condition fails two or even more villages together have a Gram Sabha. It is so in 'Gram Sabha Amarpur', and the following villages are in its jurisdiction: Mohana, Balak, Lalpur, Balapur, Amarpur and Rasulpur. Strictly speaking Balak, Lalpur and Balapur are the satellites of Mohana. They are all within a radius of a mile and a half.

Before the formation of Gram Sabhas, cases that could not be decided in caste-panchayats were either laid before the influential

people of the village or straightway taken to courts. But now all such cases are dealt with in the Gram Sabhas. Some of the cases which could be settled in the caste-panchayats are also taken to the Gram Sabhas.

A Gram Sabha consists of 36 *panch* or recognised members of the body including the head or *sarpanch*, popularly known as *pradhan*, and the *up-sarpanch* or vice-*sarpanch*. The *panch* are elected from every village over which the Gram Sabha exercises its sway, and care is taken to see that every caste is represented. When 'Gram Sabha Amarpur' was formed very few came forward for the *panchship*. There was no question of election here, but contest for the office of *pradhan* was keen. The nomination fee for *sarpanchship* is Rs. 10, for *up-sarpanchship* Rs. 5 and for *panchship* Rs. 4.

As the 'Gram Sabha Amarpur' extends its jurisdiction over a wide area, too unwieldy for the work to be carried on smoothly and efficiently, three such bodies are formed. They are known as Gram Samajs. The Gram Samajs are in Mohana, Amarpur and Rasulpur. Each Gram Samaj has a *sarpanch* who is a *panch* of 'Gram Sabha Amarpur'. The Mohana Gram Samaj is managed by the *pradhan* of the Gram Sabha. If at a meeting of a Gram Samaj a disputable point comes up and it cannot be settled amicably, the *pradhan* of the Gram Sabha is called in to settle the matter. In general all types of cases are judged in the Gram Samaj, though, strictly speaking, it is not a judicial body. In special cases the *pradhan's* opinion is asked for. The *pradhan* has every right to interfere in the proceedings of the Gram Samaj, but usually he does not do so. The main work of the Gram Samaj is to deal with the management of land-holdings, but so far it has not started functioning in this respect.

If a man wants to take a case to the Gram Sabha, he first approaches the *pradhan*. The *pradhan*, on finding the case worth considering, sends the village *chaukidar* to inform the *panch* of the place and the time of the panchayat sitting. In 99 per cent of the cases the panchayat is called to settle them, and only very rarely does the *pradhan* dispose of a case on the spot without calling the panchayat. Generally the meetings take place in the evenings, when people are free from work. Apart from the *panch*, elderly members also attend the meetings. Their views are asked for and,

wherever they are found to be acceptable, acted upon.

The *pradhan* is provided with official papers: Receipt Books, the Population Register, Register of Land Holdings, Maps, and Death and Birth Registers. Formerly, births and deaths were reported to the police outpost, but now they are reported to the Gram Sabha. The Death and Birth Register has to be maintained up-to-date, but the village *chaukidar* informs the cases fortnightly or monthly. It is the same case with the Population Register also. No written record is kept of the activities of the Gram Sabha.

The Gram Sabha has three main functions:

1. Maintenance of peace: Strictly speaking the Gram Sabha has no judicial powers, and by way of maintaining peace, it can only bring about a compromise between the parties concerned. It cannot punish anyone. This is all in theory, and in practice the Gram Sabha does exercise judicial powers. There are many cases wherein the offenders have been fined. It deals with family quarrels, differences arising out of money transactions, disputes over land, etc. Though it is illegal for the Gram Sabha to pronounce judgment and impose fines, no objection has been raised against the actions of the Gram Sabhas. On the other hand it is now an established fact that the Gram Sabha can fine a man up to Rs. 20 or Rs. 30. The money thus realised is utilised by the Sabha. When a fine is realised, and a receipt is not given, it means that the money goes into the pockets of the *pradhan*. Sometimes the offenders do not pay the fine. This is common in the case of the Thakurs.

2. Village welfare: This includes all work dealing with education, sanitation etc.

3. Supervision of Government property: No one can cultivate a new piece of land or cut down a tree on Government land, without the permission of the Gram Sabha. The income from Government property is realised by the Gram Sabha and handed over to the Government.

The *pradhan* as head of the panchayat is responsible for carrying out these functions. The *pradhan* has another duty also, and that is to organise night-watch in the winter season. This

is organised under instructions received from the police. The *pradhan* has to draw up the list of men who are to be on watch. The watch squad is changed every night. Those appointed to be on watch should be given sufficient notice. The *pradhan* is very slack in appointing men as watchers. Sometimes for days, he would not appoint anyone. Then one day he would be informed that the Inspector of Police would be in the village to inspect the night guard. This would be followed by a random selection of men to be on watch that night. A man who has been working the *beri* throughout the day may be appointed to be one of the watchers—and of course it is impossible for him to keep awake the whole night—or the watchers would be informed of their duty at about 11.30 p.m. Thus the whole thing is mismanaged. Often the watch squads go round the house of the *pradhan* shouting for some time, just to show him that they are awake, and then drop off to sleep.

A FEW OF THE CASES JUDGED IN THE GRAM SABHA AMARPUR

1. *M.-Singh* vs. *Narain.* About three years ago, Narain plucked a few gram plants from Singh's field, not as an act of stealth, but merely because he wanted to eat a little gram. Singh saw him plucking the plants and abused him. Narain told him that he plucked a few plants, just to eat a little gram and not with any intention of stealing. But Singh's anger did not cool down; so words were exchanged between them. Finally words proved inadequate to express Singh's anger and he beat Narain with *lathi*, whereby the latter suffered some injuries. He informed the *pradhan* of the matter. The Gram Sabha was called and was attended by nearly all the *panch* and a large number of villagers. The case was discussed and fault was found to be with Singh. The Panchayat declared that M.'s action was inhuman and brutal, for he beat Narain merely because he plucked a few gram plants with no idea of plucking them on the sly. M. was fined Rs. 9 but the fine was not paid and no action was taken against him. Anand Thakur is of the opinion that this was so because M. was a Thakur; if he had been of another caste, he could not have escaped the fine.

2. *R-Chamar* vs. *K-Chamar.* K-Chamar's daughter was once tending cattle in a pasture on the banks of the river Kukrail, about two miles north of Mohana. R-Chamar was also there with his cattle. A quarrel arose between them over the animals. R. tried to beat K.'s daughter, but she eluded his grasp, and abused him as she ran away from the spot. The enraged R. chased her, caught her and in a fit of rage, dealt her a blow with his *khurpi.* She fell down and was hurt both by the fall and by the blow. So she went home and reported the matter to her father, who in turn informed the *pradhan* of it and a meeting of the Gram Sabha was called. On finding R. guilty, the Sabha fined him Rs. 15. He paid the fine but was given no receipt.

3. *R-Chamar* vs. *G-Chamar.* A few months after the previous incident, R. was again summoned before the Gram Sabha. R. falsely accused G-Chamar of having threatened to kill him (R.). This rumour spread in the village. G., on hearing the false accusation brought against him, wanted the Gram Sabha to look into the matter. The Gram Sabha met. R. was asked to prove his side of the case, but he had no witnesses to stand by him. G-Chamar swore in the name of Gangaji that he never uttered a word about killing R. G. was acquitted. R. was fined Rs. 5, but the fine was reduced to Re. 1 because R. had paid Rs. 15 a few months back.

4. *G-Chamar* vs. *L-Chamar.* This case was one of theft. Three years ago G-Chamar stole a bundle of pea-plants from the field of L-Chamar. L. caught him in the act of stealing and handed him over to the Gram Sabha. G. was found guilty and was fined Rs. 10. He paid the fine but was given no receipt.

5. *B-Nai* vs. *P-Pasi.* P-Pasi was working in the fields of B-Nai when he stole about three *panseri* of Arhar pulse. He was caught redhanded. B. informed the panchayat, and P. was asked to pay a fine of Rs. 7. Again no receipt was issued.

6. *Chand Chamar* vs. *L-Chamar.* When the toddy season is at its height the villagers usually steal toddy at night. To check this nuisance, the toddy contractors appoint a few villagers as watchmen. In 1955, N-Chamar was one of the people appointed to watch the toddy trees.

It so happened that one day the wife of Chand Chamar asked

Natha Chamar to give her a few glasses of toddy. The wife of L-Chamar overheard the request and informed the contractor, who took Natha Chamar to task. The trouble started by two women soon became a quarrel between the menfolk, for when Chand heard the story he took his *ballam* (a stick with a lance attached to it) and rushed to L.'s house, and calling L.'s wife outside heaped abuses on her, whereupon she called him a thief. Chand lost his temper and aimed his *ballam* at her. L-Chamar reached the spot at the nick of the moment and rescued his wife or else the point of the *ballam* would have pierced her abdomen. Chand's fury now turned against L. and snatching L.'s *lathi* he dealt him a blow on the arm.

L.'s wife raised cries of alarm and, hearing her shrieks, Lakhai Chamar, a *panch* of the Gram Sabha, and A-Singh rushed to the place. When Chand saw these people coming, he ran away, leaving his *ballam* behind. Lakhai chased him, but Chand was soon out of sight. L. kept the *ballam* with him.

T-Ahir, a resident of a neighbouring village, was also one of the watchmen appointed by the toddy-contractor, and perhaps had often helped the Chamar of Mohana. As such he felt he had a right to interfere in the quarrel. He massaged and bandaged L.'s arm and pacified him. He advised Lakhai not to report the matter to the police. He further took it upon himself to reform Chand and, rebuking him, asked him to behave himself. But Chand was not one who would listen to advice. Once T. went away, he poured forth abuses on both Lakhai and L. and swore to take revenge upon them. Lakhai is a Gausai, and the Gausais are looked down upon by the other Chamars. Chand loudly declared that he would teach Lakhai a lesson for his behaviour against a Chamar of a higher social status. As Chand was in a drunken state at that time, no one bothered to quieten him.

The next morning Lakhai went to T. and repeated to him the words of Chand. T. asked Lakhai to bring Chand to him. At that time Chand was talking to Nath Singh (*pradhan* of the Gram Sabha), Jadhav Singh and Jodh Singh. Lakhai approached Chand and told him that T. wanted to see him. He further added that he would not let the matter rest but would see that justice was done. Chand retorted that Lakhai was merely a

Gausai and as such had no right to say anything to a Chamar of a higher status. Lakhai replied that he would see him declared an outcaste. In the mean time T. also joined them and he kicked Chand for disobeying his orders. At this Jadhav Singh interfered and asked T. not to treat anyone in that manner. Nath Singh was of the opinion that T. had no right to poke his nose in other people's affairs, and warned him not to meddle in the affairs of Mohana, for that is the jurisdiction of the Thakurs of the village. Lakhai tried to justify T.'s action, but the others turned a deaf ear to him. At this juncture L-Chamar also joined the group, and showing them his bandaged arm, threatened Chand that he would take revenge on him. Chand at first tried to justify his behaviour, but later piped down. Nath Singh advised Lakhai and L. to take the matter to the Gram Sabha. At this everybody dispersed. Chand made overtures to T. and requested A-Singh to make peace. A-Singh, however, expressed his inability to help him, and advised T. not to get himself involved in the affairs of a lower caste. He also counselled Chand not to spend any money on the case, for he was bound to be defeated.

The Gram Sabha met in the evening, and after listening to both parties, imposed a fine of Rs. 25 on Chand Chamar. On the request of Thakur Singh—younger brother of the *pradhan*—the fine was reduced to Rs. 5. L-Chamar produced Chand's *ballam* and argued for an enhancement of the fine but was asked to keep quiet.

(In concluding this case, it would be proper to answer a question which would have arisen in the mind of the reader, viz., "Why should T-Ahir of another village interfere in the affairs of the villagers of Mohana?" Justifying his action, T. said that the Thakurs do not help the Chamars, and intervened only when they could smell money. Consequently the lower caste people of Mohana, when in trouble, often approached the Ahir of the Purwas, who are economically better off than the Thakur of Mohana. Naturally the Thakur resent this. Quite possibly, what T. said is true, for it has already been seen how the Gram Sabha in realising fines from the guilty is lenient towards the Thakurs.)

7. *C-Chamar and R-Chamar* vs. *Batan Chamar.* This case was decided in the Gram Sabha at the end of 1954, but the beginning of

the trouble dates back to 1952. The situation was as follows: C., R. and Batan were three brothers living with their widowed mother. The family had eight *bighas* of land. The brothers had borrowed Rs. 600 from a few Thakurs for domestic and agricultural purposes. Batan wanted a division of the family property, while the other two brothers did not want it and to settle this, the Gram Sabha met. C. and R. presenting their case said that it would be better if the brothers lived together at least till the debt was paid. B. argued that since the question of repaying the loan was not connected with the division of property, the decision should be given in his favour. The Gram Sabha thought likewise, and divided the property as follows: two *bighas* for the mother, and two *bighas* for each of the brothers. The Panchayat further divided the loan of Rs. 600 equally among the three brothers. R. and C. accepted the decision of the Sabha. Batan had not foreseen that the Gram Sabha in dealing with the division of property would also touch upon the loan. He refused to accept his share of the loan, and, perhaps to save his face, said that since he worked as a labourer in Lucknow, he did not want a share in the land. Thereupon the Gram Sabha divided the brothers' share of six *bighas* between C. and R. and asked them to repay the loan. C. and R. somehow repaid the debt in small instalments and in December, 1954 they were free from debt. Then Batan appeared on the scene again. Seeing his brothers free from debt, he came forward demanding his share of the property. Though B. was of their own flesh and blood, C. and R. could not comply with his unreasonable demand.

Not wishing to quarrel with their brother about this, C. and R. straightway took the matter to the Gram Sabha. The three brothers and their mother presented themselves before the Sabha. A friend of C. and R. reminded the *panch* of the decision of the Sabha in 1952 concerning the division of the family property. When asked to justify his claim, B. said that he gave up his share of the family property three years ago when he was young and earned a good amount. But circumstances had changed and he could no longer live without relying on agriculture for his subsistence. The Gram Sabha found some justification in Batan's claim and declared that Batan should first pay a sum of Rs. 200 to

his brothers, and he would be given his due share of the property. That was a square deal.

PART PLAYED BY THE THAKUR AND OTHER INFLUENTIAL VILLAGERS IN MAINTAINING PEACE IN THE VILLAGE

Before the Gram Sabhas came into existence side by side with the various caste-panchayats, the Thakur and a few other influential villagers played a vital role in settling disputes and effecting compromises. In fact some of the caste-panchayats were and are not very active because the village leaders take it upon themselves to be peace-makers. Further, inter-caste and inter-village disputes lie outside the domain of the *biradaris*. But even after the formation of the Gram Sabhas, the village leaders have not relinquished their duties and privileges in this sphere. The Gram Sabhas can judge cases of any type, but oftentimes cases without being taken to the Gram Sabha Amarpur are laid before the village leaders. The villagers are of the opinion that this shows a lack of confidence in the Gram Sabha. Perhaps it is so. But it might also be due to the fact that the influential people of the village are officials of the Gram Sabha, and so it comes to the same thing whether the case is taken to the Gram Sabha or to the village leaders. Further, when a case is laid before the leader, the eminent men of the village, who are not members of the Gram Sabha, also can have a say in the matter.

CASES SETTLED BY THE THAKUR AND VILLAGE LEADERS

1. A mare of S-Singh's entered B-Nai's fields and was doing considerable damage to the crops. B-Nai informed S-Singh, but the latter did not take any notice, for he was too busy playing cards. Simultaneously a Chamar came running to the place and said that another mare of S-Singh's was grazing in his fields. S. turned a deaf ear to his complaints also. Luckily for the Nai and the Chamar Nath Singh, the *pradhan*, was present there and he ordered S. to go and get his mares out of the fields, and Singh had to obey him.

2. *G-Singh* vs. *K-Kumhar.* The fields of V-Singh, the village headman, are on a higher level than the fields of K-Kumhar, so that when getting water from the canal by the *beri* method, if the water from the drains or pools is directed to K.'s fields, V. Singh's fields do not get enough of it. One day in Aghan (Nov.-Dec.) 1951, it so happened that G-Singh, son of V. Singh, was working on the *beri* to have his father's fields watered. At that time K-Kumhar made an outlet in the drain in which the canal water flowed and directed the flow of water to his fields. G. asked him to allow V. Singh's fields to be watered first. Seeing that K. paid no heed to his words, G. himself plugged the outlet. K. called out to his cousin J-Kumhar and together they tried to beat G., but G. called out for help and his cousin B-Singh came running. G. and B. chased the two Kumhars who ran away only to reappear on the scene with five or six other Kumhars. The Kumhars advanced towards G. with the idea of beating him. G. was alone, but his shouts sent R-Singh rushing to the spot with his sword. The sight of R-Singh with the sword set the Kumhar crowd running, for R. has the reputation of being a killer. On the evening of the same day, K. and J. were asked to present themselves before a group of Thakurs and were given a warning for what they did. The two Kumhars could do nothing in that company but apologise and promise to behave themselves.

3. *C-Chamar* vs. *L-Kumhar.* One day in Kartik (Oct.-Nov.), 1952, L-Kumhar was grazing his bullocks in C-Chamar's fields and refused to take his cattle away even after being asked to do so, on the plea that C. should have requested him, as becomes a lower caste man, and not commanded him. C., however, not minding the words of L., drove the animals away. L. went to his brother J. and exaggerating the incident, told him that C-Chamar not only beat the animals, but beat him also. L. and J. went to C.'s fields with their cousin K., and there J. and K. beat C. with *lathis* till he fell down unconscious. C.'s brothers R. and Batan were present there with a few other Chamars, but being frightened of the Kumhars they did not intervene. A-Singh heard of the incident and hurrying to the spot found K. and J. there. He reprimanded them severely. C., who was seriously wounded, had to be removed to his house on a cot. The Thakurs of the village,

including *Mukhia* V. Singh and Nath Singh, assembled together to decide on the punishment for J. and K. C.'s brothers R. and Batan, who were thinking of reporting the matter to the police were persuaded by the Thakurs not to do so. It was decided that J. and K. should apologise for their brutal deed, and pay Rs. 15 each to C. The Chamars are in such a humiliated condition that when C. heard that the Kumhars had apologised he even refused to accept the money from them.

4. *P-Pasi* vs. *L- and J-Kumhar.* In the summer of 1954, L., passing through the melon field of P-Pasi, saw a knife there and picked it up. P. asked him to return it but L. refused to part with it. P. went to L.'s brother J., but he also refused to have the knife returned. An altercation arose between them, and J. threatened P. with dire consequences, if he did not keep quiet. P. called him a thief, and went away saying that he would not be cowed down into giving away his knife like that. Two days later, P. was attacked at night and in the morning he was found lying unconscious with severe wounds. He did not know who had attacked him, but this incident followed so close on the heels of P.'s quarrel with the Kumhars that the Kumhars were naturally suspected of being the mischief-makers. So a number of Pasis joined together and surrounded the houses of the Kumhars, but the Kumhars did not come outside, and so the Pasis returned disappointed. Then the elders among the Pasis dissuaded them from doing anything rash, saying that on mere suspicion the whole community of Kumhars should not be punished.

5. *P-Lohar* vs. *J-Kumhar.* Near P-Lohar's house is a plot of land which belongs to V-Singh. P. used to grow tobacco there, and also use the land to tie his cattle on. In 1954, J-Kumhar, who also lives adjacent to this plot of land, opened a new door to his house. This door led out into the plot of land under discussion. One day when most people in that locality had gone to the fields to work on the *beri*, J. told P. that the piece of land belonged to him and asked P. to remove his animals from there and to clean the place, so that his animals could be tied there. P. replied that the land in question belonged to V-Singh who had allowed him to use it as his own and added that J. could also tie his animals there along with his. But J. reasserted his claim over the land and

threatened to kill P. if he did not give up his right to use the place. P. hurried to get help from someone and met Baran Singh, younger brother of J. Singh. Baran went with P. to the place of quarrel and decided that P-Lohar should use half the plot and give the other half to J. Both agreed to abide by this decision. But the same evening J. went back on his word and claimed the whole piece as his own, on the advice of P-Kumhar who said that if J. insisted he would get the whole plot. Again P. rushed to Baran and requested him to intervene. Baran went straight to the Kumhar locality and admonished all the Kumhars for not checking J. from causing so much trouble. He asked the oldest Kumhar, Hira, to forbid J. from doing anything so foolish as to claim the piece of land which was not his, otherwise it would be reported to the police. Hira promised to do his best and the next morning J.'s mother went to Baran and apologised on her son's behalf. Ultimately J. renounced his claim to that piece of land.

6. *Trouble caused by a Pandit from Lucknow.* In March, 1955 K-Kalwar of Mohana arranged a recitation of the *Bhagwat Katha* and invited a Pandit from Lucknow. The Pandit was the guest of a Kalwar. He recited the *Bhagwat Katha* to a fairly large gathering regularly from late evening till late in the night. Usually when someone arranges a *katha* he does it with the consent of the villagers, but K. did not work in accordance with this tradition, and as a result he did not get the whole-hearted cooperation of the villagers. However, the *katha* was attended by a large number of villagers.

The Pandit was a young man and a bit of a dandy. There was no gravity in his recitations. His mannerisms deprived him of the respect that he would have got otherwise. The villagers would not have minded all these. The trouble arose because the Pandit had no moral code to abide by, as will be seen presently.

The women of the village also participated in the *katha* and went to listen to it. Some of the women modestly sat apart, but not so the unmarried Thakur girls who, dressed gorgeously, sat just in front of the Pandit. Some Thakurs, including G-Singh, objected to this and asked the guardians of these girls to forbid them to attend the *katha.* But the girls continued to attend it and sit in the same place. N-Singh, a young Thakur lad, one day noticed that the Pandit looked wistfully at these Thakur girls, who res-

ponded to his glances with smiles. He was furious, and decided to prevent the Pandit from dallying with the girls. The next day, N-Singh, pretending to be joking, passed certain caustic remarks about the character of the Pandit. G-Singh understood the underlying meaning of the jokes and asked N. to keep quiet, but N. became more and more insulting. In the mean time, the Pandit threw a garland to the daughter of J-Singh. On this, N. tried to instigate the other Thakurs to beat the Pandit. The Thakurs, however, hesitated to lay hands upon a Brahmin. The following day G. scolded N. for his conduct who persisted that he was in the right and said that if the Pandit repeated the act, he would give him a sound thrashing. G. objected to it and said that the fault lay with the girls and they should be prevented from attending the *katha*. Both G. and N. emphasised their own point and in the heat of the argument both lost their temper. The situation was saved by the timely interference of some Thakurs, who pacified them. G. asked the Thakurs not to send their daughters and sisters to the *katha*, while N. sent threatening messages to the Pandit. K. Kalwar apologised to N. on behalf of the Pandit for his behaviour. V. N. Singh, father of Jadhav and uncle of N., forbade them both to quarrel any more. Thus the tense situation was calmed down.

7. *Villagers of Mohana* vs. *the people of the Purwas*. The people of Mohana had a general complaint against the residents of the neighbouring *Purwas*, Balapur and Lalpur, for the latter often used Mohana land as pasture for their cattle. Previously they grazed their animals and cut grass outside the populated areas, but in 1955 the Ahirs of Lalpur and Balapur, a few people of Jhalva and the Gadarias of Chandan Kondar were seen in the village with their animals. The people of Mohana objected to this, particularly that year when there was a scarcity of fodder. But in spite of their objection, they could not keep the trespassers away. Therefore, on the 27th of August, a few of the prominent people of Mohana assembled in front of the house of M. Singh to consider the matter. Those present were A-Singh, Baran Singh, V-Singh, S-Singh, R-Singh, J-Singh, Bux Singh, and Kushihar Kalwar. It was decided that the trespassers should once again be asked not to graze their cattle on village land. If they still persisted in doing so, the

animals should be sent to the pound. The people of the *Purwas* were informed of the decision taken by the people of Mohana; since then those people have not been found grazing their cattle in Mohana.

8. Vishwanath borrowed two goats from A-Singh on the agreement that the kids would be divided equally between them. Soon one of the goats brought forth a kid, which, however, ere long was found missing. Vishwanath's son G. searched all over the village, but could not find it. He was then informed that the missing kid was seen in the house of Baksh Singh. G. was quite surprised at this, because Baksh Singh's son Shatruhan was one of his close friends. G. went to the house of Baksh Singh and sat at the doorway talking to the wife of Baksh. While they were talking a child came out of the house and told G. that meat was being cooked. At that G. saw the face of Baksh's wife turn pale, but he did not question her. In the evening, under cover of darkness, G. climbed a tree behind Baksh Singh's house, and from this position of vantage he saw Shatruhan, his sister and I., another Thakur of the village, cooking meat. He also saw the skin and other remains of the kid lying close by. He was now convinced that it was the kid stolen from his father's stock. He was sorry that his best friend had proved faithless, and he was strongly determined to take revenge. He attributed Shatruhan's faithlessness to an incident which took place some time back in which G. and Indrapal had quarrelled. Indrapal had refused to work in the *beri* of a Chamar who had worked in his (Indrapal's) *beri*. When G. questioned Indrapal about this, he was asked to mind his business. G. lost his temper and attempted a *lathi* blow at Indrapal. It was averted by the intervention of some people who were working in the neighbourhood. In this quarrel Shatruhan sided with Indrapal, because Shatruhan's sister was in love with Indrapal. Now again Shatruhan had joined Indrapal and played him out. G. was very angry. His father tried to pacify him, but failed. At that time A-Singh was not in the village. G. decided to wait for his return and get his advice as to what he should do. But before his return, G. and Shatruhan had the opportunity to meet. G. asked him about the kid. Shatruhan swore that neither he nor anyone in his family had stolen the kid from his father. G. did not want to break a

friendship on the strength of a mere suspicion, and so the matter was dropped.

9. Three women in the village are noted shrews. They are the wives of S-Singh, B-Singh and V-Singh. They are often involved in quarrels, instances of which are given below.

One evening when N-Singh went home, he found that his wife had not cooked their meal. When he asked her why she had not, she replied indifferently that she did not cook simply because there was nothing in the house to cook. Then when he asked her why she had not told him about it earlier, she said that it was not her responsibility. This answer enraged him and he beat her. While beating her, he also accused her of adopting the habits of the women of the neighbourhood. He obviously referred to S-Singh's wife. S-Singh's wife heard the remark and knew it referred to her. She got on to the roof of her house which is adjacent to N.'s house and asked him to explain the remark about the 'women of the neighbourhood'. N. tried his best to avoid a quarrel with her, but she appeared eager to be involved in one. An altercation arose, which soon developed into a serious verbal fight. N. left his wife, went on to the roof, got hold of S.'s wife and slapped her twice or thrice. She shrieked, calling out to her husband to come and take revenge. S., who knew of the quarrel from the beginning, told his wife that the blame lay with her. V. is the other neighbour of S. V.'s wife (who is also a quarrelsome woman) got on to the roof of S.'s house with the help of a ladder and gave a beating to N. Thus insulted and humiliated, N. went down and beat his wife again since she was the cause of all this trouble. V.'s wife hurried down from the roof and tried to shield N.'s wife, but N. went on beating her, till V. himself shouted at N. and threatened that if he did not let off beating his wife, he would come and beat the life out of him. N. left off beating his wife and ran away from the house. Men were sent to look for N. but they returned disappointed. However N. returned of his own accord at midnight. His wife left the house and lived with V.'s wife for two days after which she returned to her home and lived with her husband. During the two days when she was at V.'s house, V.'s daughter cooked food for N. Peace was restored between husband and wife through the agency of V. V. is the uncle of N. and he warned his nephew not to beat his (N.'s) wife again.

10. The morning after the quarrel, Jas Singh went to N.'s house and scolded him for beating someone else's wife (he was referring to the tussle N. had with V.'s wife). N. was yet smarting under the previous day's incidents, and Jas's words added fuel to the fire. He retorted that Jas should not forget the day when he himself beat someone else's wife. Jas had to go away hanging his head in shame. The incident that N. referred to was the quarrel that Ram Singh, Jas's son, had with the wife of B. Singh. Ram is one who likes female company. One day he went to B.'s house and cracked some vulgar jokes with B.'s wife. In her anger she slapped him and there ensued a fight. She got hold of his throat, and he of her hair. The fight continued till both of them fell down tired. When Jas heard of this, he hurried to B's house and threatened to kill B.'s wife. B. intervened and after much pleading persuaded Jas to go away.

11. Here is another quarrel in which women—veritable Amazons—played a full part. Once Manker borrowed some oil from Jan's mother. A fortnight later Jan's sister asked Manker's wife to return the oil. But Manker's wife refused to give it back, and said that she should ask for the oil from the one to whom she lent it. This developed into a quarrel. By this time Jan's mother also had gone there. She and her daughter beat Manker's wife thoroughly, who would have fared worse, if the menfolk of both families had not intervened and put an end to the quarrel.

12. For some reason or other, there was a quarrel between Manker and Jadhav. Jadhav went to Manker's house and challenged him to a *lathi*-fight. Manker did not go out of the house, but Jadhav stood at the door and abused him. Jadhav's wife went that way to find out the details of the quarrel. On the way she met Manker's wife, and forgetting everything else entered upon a hand-to-hand fight with her, and came out victorious. Thus the quarrel between Jadhav and Manker ended.

QUARRELS AMONG INFLUENTIAL THAKUR

However useful a part the Thakur may play in establishing peace and friendship among the villagers, their role in disturbing the peace of the village is none the less important. Quarrels among

the Thakur are serious and frequent, more so because none of the other villagers can check them.

There are three main groups among the Thakur of this village. One group is headed by Bir Singh, which, when necessary, allies with the second group led by Baran Singh. The leader of the third group is Jodh Singh. This group includes also a minor sub-group led by Vishwanath Singh, Murari Singh, Iqbal Singh and Ram Pal Singh. The group led by Vishwanath Singh used to be very strong a few years back, but after the zamindari abolition, it faded into the background. Though the groups of Baran and Bir outwardly work separately, on all important matters they join hands and work in unison. The families of Vishwanath Singh and Baran Singh are old rivals, and there has been no love lost between them, so that when Vishwanath's group was losing power, there was nothing for the others to do but to become one with the group of Jodh Singh. Thus all the Thakur belong to either of the two opposing factions: the followers of Bir and Baran, and the followers of Jodh Singh.

The little that has so far been said of the Thakur groups will help us to understand the series of heated discussions, quarrels, conflicts and hand-to-hand fights that have taken place between them, and an account of these disturbances will be given straight away.

1. This incident occurred about 15 years ago, during the zamindari days, and lies at the root of the enmity between the families of Nath and Bir Singh. One day, Bir Singh and his brother Karan beat a few Dhobis on the ground that their behaviour towards the Thakurs was haughty and impertinent. These Dhobis and their families cultivated the fields of Nath, and therefore he was interested in their welfare. So they complained to him that Bir and Karan beat them. As a friend and protector of the Dhobis, Nath was filled with righteous indignation. He ordered the Dhobis to catch hold of Bir and Karan, who were at that time working in the fields and to beat them. No sooner were the words out of Nath's mouth than the Dhobis rushed to get at the brothers, but the brothers seeing the Dhobis at a distance and guessing their intentions, quickly left the fields to find a hiding place. Thus they escaped a beating. From that day they became the sworn enemies of Nath, and were on the look-out for an opportune moment to beat Nath. They

had not to wait long, for one day they caught sight of Nath alone in front of the house of Maharaj Singh and they beat him with *lathis*. The injured man fell down unconscious, and the brothers left him there thinking he was dead. A little later he was seen by his relatives and taken home. A report was lodged at the police sta ion at Kandion. Nath could not be admitted in the hospital because he was poor. He had to be content with the medicines locally available and was ill for three or four months. Not being under a doctor's treatment, he could not produce a medical certificate in support of his case. Moreover, when the police came to the village to investigate the matter Bir and Karan are said to have bribed them, and the whole affair was hushed up. The other Thakurs of the village did not speak up for Nath because they were afraid of the brothers.

2. This incident took place in August, 1955. One evening Jadhav Singh (son of Nath) saw that a leg of one of his goats was fractured, and on enquiry found that Jag Singh (nephew of Baran and neighbour of Jadhav) had broken the animal's leg, because it had grazed in a small field belonging to him. Jadhav scolded Jag for the injury caused to the goat. He demanded a goat in return, in case the wounded one should die of the injuries received at the hands of Jag. Jadhav was accompanied by his cousin Naktoo, who supported his claim. Baran who is always on the look out for opportunities to humiliate the family of Nath came out of his house and abused Jadhav. Nath, the neighbour of Baran, rushed to the spot and took up cudgels on behalf of Jadhav. He challenged Baran upon his insults to Jadhav. Meanwhile Rameshwar Singh (nephew of Baran) and Ganesh Singh (father of Jag and cousin of Baran) had gathered there. They surrounded Jadhav and Nath and attacked them with *lathis*. Nath received a blow from Rameshwar's *lathi*. Jadhav had by this time succeeded in snatching the *lathi* from Jag's hand. He hit Rameshwar twice. Rameshwar ran away, followed by Ganesh who had also received a blow from Jadhav. Jadhav then pounced upon Baran, who was getting ready to attack the bare-handed Nath, and dealt him several *lathi* blows. Baran ran into his house and bolt d the doors. Rameshwar and Ganesh while running away from Jadhav met Chatra, the second son of Nath. Rameshwar closed upon him

from behind, and Ganesh attacked him. Chatra received blows on his head and arm. Naktoo Singh, who in the beginning saw Jadhav fighting bare-handed, rushed to his house to get his lance but his wife shut the door and he could not get it. By the time he was able to get one from someone else and reach the spot, the other villagers had intervened and pacified the angry men. The other Thakurs were also there and they scolded those who took part in the fight. Each tried to prove his innocence and accused the other of starting the fight. Baran vowed that he would take revenge on Jadhav for the *lathi*-blow. Nath threw a challenge to Baran to settle the matter in whatever manner he liked. However, luckily they did not indulge themselves in another fight at that time.

The next day, Nadu Singh, brother of Baran, lodged a report against Nath at the police outpost of Kandion. The day after that, Jadhav went to Lucknow where he met Dr. M. (an ex-zamindar of the village) and tried to poison his mind against Baran. He also persuaded Dr. M. to sell his mangoes to him and deposited Rs. 5 with him for that purpose. The mango grove was tended by Baran. Raghubir claimed that particular grove as his own. He had quarrelled with Dr. M. over that grove and there had even been a police case. Jadhav purchased the annual yield of that grove in order to irritate and annoy Raghubir Singh.

The following day, Jadhav was plucking the mangoes of that grove. Raghubir objected to this and threatened Jadhav with dire consequences. An open fight was prevented, but Jadhav lodged a report with the police. In the mean time, Dr. M.'s cousin, Baboo, had also lodged a report against Raghubir with the police. His report included the names of most of the members of Baran's group. So on the following day, the police went to the village, and handcuffed Nadu Singh, Baran, Raghubir and a few others of their family. Nath was also arrested, but he was released immediately. The other Thakur of the village went to the police station and stood surety for those arrested. They were released on bail.

Dr. M. went to the village and persuaded the rival parties to come to a compromise. But it was not a longstanding compromise, for soon they were again at daggers-drawn.

3. As is usual, the cause of the quarrel was a trifle. Once, Chatra, son of Nath, passed some offensive remarks about Indra Singh,

nephew of Baran. Indra Singh is a brother of Ishwar who had beaten Chatra in a previous encounter. So now Indra reminded Chatra of that incident. Infuriated by this impertinence Chatra threatened Indra with his *lathi*. Indra then reminded Chatra of his father's plight, when he was beaten by Baran's group, till he was unconscious. Chatra threatened to avenge it with interest. Indra did not behave himself. Luckily other people intervened and an ugly situation was averted.

The next day, Baran fixed a wooden peg in a plot owned by Nath and tied his bullock there. Nath naturally objected to it and said that the plot belonged to him. Baran replied that the plot belonged to him. Nath went to Lucknow and reported the matter to Dr. M. The land in question lay next to Baran's land and was given to Nath by Dr. M. Dr. M. tried to make peace between the two, but he did not succeed in ending the dispute. Nath then sought the help of the Police Inspector, who promised to help him but did not go to the place of quarrel. Nath then took the dispute to some elderly Thakurs of Rampur and Rudahi villages for settlement. A day was fixed on which Dr. M., the Police Inspector of Kandion and the elderly Thakurs of Rampur and Rudahi were to meet and settle the quarrel. However, on that day, none of them turned up for the meeting because of heavy rains. The next day a few Thakur of Mohana including Jodh Singh, Mohan Singh, Gaya Singh and Bir Singh mediated and it was decided that Baran should not fix his peg in the plot till Dr. M. and the others met and the case was settled. So Baran had to remove his peg. When Dr. M. visited the village, the case was taken to him. It was decided in favour of Nath Singh.

4. Three weeks later, there was another quarrel. A piece of land that lies in front of Naktoo's house is Government property and is under the Gram Sabha's supervision. Naktoo Singh used to tie his cattle there, and in doing so was committing trespass, for no villager can use Government land. Bir Singh one day asked Naktoo to remove his animals from that land and said that if it was not done he also would tie his cattle there. Naktoo Singh paid no heed to Bir's words. On July 24, Bir Singh, together with Karan Singh, Indra, Jag, Raja Ram Singh and Mahraj Singh, all of them followers of Bir, went to Naktoo's house and asked him

to remove the peg (to which the animals were tied) from that land. Naktoo came out of his house and abused Bir Singh, who in a fit of rage pulled out the peg. Seeing this, Naktoo pounced on Bir, but was stopped by Karan and Indra who caught hold of him and threatened him with *lathis*. Naktoo, however, got out of their clutches and shouted for help. Many of the villagers assembled there and advised both Naktoo and Bir to take the case to the Gram Sabha. But the *Pradhan* was not in the village and the matter was postponed till his return. On the evening of the same day Naktoo refixed the peg, and collecting a number of his friends challenged Bir and his men to a fight, but Bir did not accept the challenge.

An interesting sidelight of this case is that Nath Singh, the *Pradhan* of the Gram Sabha, is a nephew of Baran Singh. He knew that an attack on Naktoo had been planned and so, afraid of the consequences, he had gone away.

5. Irrigating the fields by the *beri* system needs some preliminary work such as preparing the drains and pools. In this method, people generally avoid hiring labourers, but people of the same caste work together on the *Jan* system, that is, if A wants to have his fields watered, he would go to four or five of his fellow caste men and inform them of his *beri* day. On that day all of them would help A to irrigate his fields. Then A in his turn will have to work on the *beri* days of the people who helped him. Those whose help is needed for working the *beri* must be informed two or three days in advance. It is the general practice that influential people are given the priority to use the tank for irrigation. Now then, among the influential people who should be given the first chance ? This problem is the cause of many a quarrel, as will be seen in the case given below.

On November 27, 1955, Man Singh, Kalloo Singh, and Naktoo Singh (all nephews of Nath) prepared the pools and connecting drains, to irrigate their fields on December 4. They also informed a few Thakur to come and help them to irrigate the fields. Next day, i.e., on November 28, Baran Singh said in the presence of Jodh Singh that every year his (Baran's) family had the priority in using the tank, but this year owing to his illness the family of Nath had taken the first chance. Jodh Singh, not willing to interfere in the affair, kept quiet. But, on the same day, hot

words were exchanged between Baran and Kalloo Singh on the same issue, and each insisted on his own claims.

Kalloo Singh said that since he and his brothers had prepared the pools and drains they would irrigate their fields on December 4. On the other hand, Baran Singh, knowing that he had no chance of having his claim recognised diplomatically, announced that his uncle Bir Singh would irrigate his fields on December 5. Bir is one whom most villagers fear, and that was why Baran dragged his name into the strife, but Kalloo, Jadhav and Naktoo (all relatives of Nath) who heard the words of Baran, showed no signs of giving in. Baran said that none could fix December 5 as his *beri* day, except his uncle Bir. He further added that just because his uncle was old, others should not feel that he could be beaten, for as long as his nephews (meaning himself and his brothers) were alive, no one could touch him. Naktoo and Jadhav tauntingly asked him where he and his brothers had gone when the Ahirs of Lalpur and Balapur forcibly entered the house of Bir, and only the other villagers went forward to help him. This remark hurt Baran sorely and he told his opponents that if they were not going to yield he would adopt other methods to subdue them. Kalloo was none the less angry and he challenged Baran to a *lathi* fight. Just then Nath came to that place, but his presence did not mend matters. It only helped to make the situation worse. A little later, Bir Singh came to the spot. Somehow at that time, he was all for peace and said that he did not want any quarrel on his behalf. He asked Nath to have December 5 as his *beri* day. Truly, the man of wisdom never spoke truer words than when he said, 'A soft answer turneth away wrath', for immediately Nath cooled down and said that since Bir's fields were far away from the tank he could irrigate his fields on December 5. Thus it was settled amicably that Bir's fields be watered on December 5, Nath's fields on 6th, and Baran's fields after that, and they all agreed to work on one another's *beri* days.

Thus, one after another, quarrels take place between the two groups. From the cases given above it would be observed that in the group of Jodh, the people often involved in quarrels are Nath and members of his family; but there is no doubt that they are backed by the others who are antagonistic to Bir's party. Bir's followers boast of much wealth at their command. The other

group is poorer in comparison, and particularly Nath is greatly handicapped by his poverty, but then Jodh Singh has a greater number of followers than Bir and that puts the scales equal. Baran's brother J. is the *pradhan* of the Gram Sabha, and that, the groups of Bir and Baran think, is a strong point in their favour, even though so far none of their quarrels have been taken to the Gram Sabha. To balance this, Bir and Baran have had a bone to pick with Dr. M., who, though residing outside Mohana, still has much influence in the village by virtue of having been a rich zamindar. The police, since they can easily be bribed, may be said to favour Bir. However the two sides are evenly matched, and hence there is no end to their disputes. They are always on the look-out for opportunities to harass their enemies. For instance, recently, Bir has opened an outlet in his house, facing a side wall of Naktoo's house. So the dirty water which flows through this outlet falls on the wall of Naktoo's house. Naktoo is naturally sick of it.

Even if the followers of Bir always stand against the followers of Jodh, it does not mean that all the Thakur of Bir's group or all of Jodh's group are of one mind, for these groups are made of smaller sub-groups which off and on come into conflict with one another. Such an incident happened in 1954 when Nath Singh arranged a *katha path* at his house. There is no caste restriction in attending the *katha* or receiving the *prasad* distributed on that occasion. Anyone can attend whether invited or not, but then people want to feel important and receive special invitations. It so happened that Nath did not invite Bir for the *katha*—whether it was done wilfully or by mistake, no one can say—and Bir could not stand the insult. So he arranged a *katha* at the same time in his house and invited a *Pandit* from outside to recite the *katha*. This he did to prevent some of the villagers at least from attending the *katha* at the house of Nath. The result was that some of the villagers attended the *katha* at the house of Nath and others attended the one at the house of Bir, and so neither of the ceremonies could be successful.

The Adalat Panchayat. Over and above the Gram Sabhas is the Adalat Panchayat also known as Adalti Panchayat or Nyaya Panchayat, which wields its power over at least 10,000 people, i.e.,

roughly speaking, over about five Gram Sabhas. But the Adalat Panchayat Kandion comprises only three Gram Sabhas, namely, Gram Sabha Amarpur, Gram Sabha Kandion and Gram Sabha Gooramba.

The Adalat Panchayat is a purely judicial body recognised by the Government. The Gram Sabha is only an administrative body, but its interference in judicial cases is not considered illegal. If the Gram Sabha is unable to settle any cases, they are handed over to the Adalat Panchayat. Cases can be taken directly also to the Adalat Panchayat.

The Adalat Panchayat Kandion has 15 *panch*, five from each Gram Sabha. Of the five *panch* from Gram Sabha Amarpur, two are from Mohana, two from Amarpur and one from Balak. From among the fifteen *panch* one is elected as *Sarpanch* and another as *Up-sarpanch*. The present *Sarpanch* of the Adalat Panchayat Kandion is a cashier in the Lucknow municipality and hence he is free only on Sundays to devote any time to the activities of the Panchayat. As a rule, the Adalat Panchayat should meet at least once a month, but since the *panch* are very busy, each in his own trade, meetings are not held regularly.

All the proceedings of the Adalat Panchayat are recorded. When a case is taken to this Panchayat, it has to be submitted in writing. If the plaintiff is illiterate, he approaches the *Sarpanch* and narrates the case and the latter gets his thumb impression or signature on the application. It is the duty of the *Sarpanch* to hear and record all cases brought to him by those who cannot submit them in writing. While filing the case with the Adalat Panchayat the requisite fee has to be submitted along with it. This Panchayat deals with both criminal and revenue cases. The fee for a criminal case is 50 nP, but the fee for a revenue case varies according to the valuation. The rate is as follows:

Up to a valuation of Rs. 24—25 nP.
Up to a valuation of Rs. 25 to Rs. 50—50 nP.

And then there is an increase of 25 nP for every additional rupee. The Adalat Panchayat deals with revenue cases only up to the value of Rs. 100. It has also the power to fine up to Rs. 100.

When a case is filed in the Adalat Panchayat, it is recorded in the panchayat register. The date of hearing is noted down and summonses are issued to the people concerned. The *Sarpanch* then nominates a *panch mandal* (a council of five *panch*) from among the fifteen *panch* to look into the matter and decide the case. This *panch mandal* may or may not include the *Sarpanch*, but a *panch* of the applicant's village is included in it. Formerly a *panch mandal* had only three members, but now it has five.

As a rule, a case must be decided within six weeks, but in actual practice it sometimes takes more time. Cases are tried during the day, so that *panch* from the distant villages may be able to attend it. The two parties concerned in the case must be present. First the plaintiff is asked to take an oath in the name of Gangaji that he will speak the truth, and then he narrates the case before the *panch mandal*. The defendant is not bound to take the oath. If it is a criminal case, evidences are asked for and the case can be rejected for want of 'sufficient proof'. If the case is of a simple nature, it can be decided in one hearing, but complicated ones are postponed for further hearings.

SOME CASES JUDGED IN THE ADALAT PANCHAYAT

1. *Jeet Singh, Bir Singh, Lagan Singh and Matai Singh (all of Amarpur)* vs. *Baran Singh, Kheda Pasi, Jiwan Pasi and Purbi Kumhar (all of Mohana)*. In *Aghan* (Nov.-Dec.) 1955, the people of Mohana irrigated their fields, taking water either from tanks or from the canal. At that time water in the canal was very low, and it could hardly suffice the needs of the villagers. As a result, there was no steady flow of canal water to Amarpur. Following this a few people from Amarpur, including Jeet Singh, Lagan Singh and Matai Singh went to Mohana and spoke to Baran Singh who was at that time irrigating his fields with the water of the Beri Tal (the pond near the school). They told him that the people of Mohana should not use the canal water, as the people of Amarpur could not get any water. Baran replied that he had no right to give any such orders to the people of Mohana. They said that his brother, the *pradhan*, could issue the orders, to which Baran replied that the *pradhan* had no power to stop the people from using the

canal water, and that the only thing the people of Amarpur could do was to appeal to the people of Mohana not to use the canal for a day or two. In the mean time, the *pradhan* came there. When he heard all that the people of Amarpur had to tell him, he replied that he could not go house-to-house with them to request the people, on their behalf, not to use the canal water for two or three days. He also expressed his inability to intervene in the matter officially. Seeing that they could not get any help from the *pradhan* or his brother, the people of Amarpur went away in anger, saying that they would do what they could in this matter.

Soon the people of Amarpur filed a criminal case against Baran Singh, Kheda Pasi, Jiwan Pasi and Purbi Kumhar in the Kandion Police Station. It was reported that the Chamars of Amarpur, on instructions from their Thakurs, went to Mohana to close the outlet of the canal in Mohana so as to divert the flow of water to Amarpur. Baran, Kheda Pasi, Jiwan Pasi and Purbi Kumhar who were near the canal, checked the Chamars from doing so. But as the Chamars were persistent, Baran shouted, 'Catch hold of these Chamars and beat the duffers who do not obey our orders.' It was also reported that Baran's party was armed with *lathis*, and that Baran had a pistol with him. Since the Chamars from Amarpur were unarmed they ran away in fear.

The police handed the case over to the Adalat Panchayat to take the necessary steps. The Adalat Panchayat served summons against Baran, Kheda, Jiwan, and Purbi. The recipients of the summons were very surprised, for they never thought that the talk which the people of Amarpur had with Baran and his brother would result in this. They consulted Dr. M. as to what they should do. He said that the best thing would be for the people of Mohana to declare open fight against the people of Amarpur, and he offered to deal with the consequences. But Baran did not like this idea. So Dr. M. suggested that they should see Ram Swarup, Officer-in-charge of Kandion Police Station and act according to his advice. He gave a letter to Ram Swarup, requesting him to help Baran in this affair. Baran met Ram Swarup, and gave him Dr. M.'s letter. Ram Swarup advised Baran to file a counter-case against the people of Amarpur. So Baran lodged a report against Jeet Singh, Magan Singh, Bir Singh and Matai Singh of Amarpur, in the Kandion Police

Station. The report was to the effect that he (Baran) was busy irrigating his fields taking water from Beri Tal. Bir Singh and Jagmohan Singh were also irrigating their fields with the same water. The above-mentioned Thakur of Amarpur along with a hundred armed people came to him and said loudly that no one should be allowed to use the canal water for two days. Baran's reply was that it was beyond his powers to do anything about it. On hearing this, Jeet Singh abused him and asked his men to beat him. At once Baran ran away and taking refuge behind the *Shivala* shouted for help. Hearing his cries, Kheda Pasi and Jiwan Pasi ran to his rescue with bows and arrows. Baran further stated that Jeet had a pistol with him. He reported that if Kheda Pasi and Jiwan Pasi had not come in time, the people of Amarpur would have killed him. This report was also handed over to the Adalat Panchayat. Nearly six months elapsed before the case was decided.

The *Sarpanch* of the Adalat Panchayat is a close friend of Jeet, but since he is good and just, he himself visited the spot and inquired about the matter from the women, boys and girls of Balak, Bijapur and Mohana who were in the pastures near the place and at the time of the quarrel. After a thorough enquiry, he found both the cases were false. Since Jeet had taken the initiative in reporting, the *Sarpanch* warned him severely and said that such false accusations never succeeded. He advised both parties to come to a compromise, and they did so.

2. *Raju Ahir* vs. *Lakhan Ahir* (Jan. 1950). Raju Ahir claimed that he gave three and a half maunds of wheat to Lakhan Ahir on the *derhi* basis. He demanded the grain at the time of harvest, but Lakhan said that he would give it at the next harvest. Harvesting season came again, but still there were no signs of Lakhan returning it. The case was taken to the Gram Sabha, but could not be settled and so it was placed before the Adalat Panchayat. From the statements of Raju and his witnesses it was proved that only one maund of wheat was lent to Lakhan. Jodh Singh, a witness of the plaintiff, is also the *vice-pradhan* of the Gram Sabha. He stated that a month and a half before, the case was taken to the Gram Sabha, when Raju Ahir claimed that he gave three and a half maunds to Lakhan Ahir on the *derhi* basis. Lakhan made a counter-claim that Raju owed him some

money. When a settlement of that was made it was found that the sum Raju had to pay was more than the cost of wheat Lakhan had to give him. Thereupon Raju said that his son was employed by Lakhan as watchman for six months, and Lakhan had to pay him his wages. Lakhan alleged that Raju's son was taking his meals at his (Lakhan's) place, and so he had to be paid for that. Because of all these claims and counter-claims the Gram Sabha had been unable to decide the case. The Adalat Panchayat, taking into consideration all the details of the various claims of both plaintiff and defendant, decided that the claims of both were equal. The case was summarily dismissed.

3. *Potan Ahir* vs. *Khooroo Dhobi.* In August 1951, a quarrel took place between Potan Ahir and Khooroo Dhobi. A *kachcha* road runs in front of Khooroo Dhobi's house. The village cattle use this road. A cow of Potan Ahir often went inside the house of Khooroo and ate up the fodder or chewed the clothes. Khooroo Dhobi told Potan that either his cow should not be allowed to come that way, or someone should accompany it and prevent it from entering the house. But Potan Ahir gave no ear to Khooroo and the latter was very angry at this and he beat the cow. In the mean time, members of Potan's family went to the place and spoke angrily to Khooroo. An exchange of words took place between the women of both families. After a time Potan himself went there with a few others and quarrelled with Khooroo Dhobi. Khooroo answered him angrily. Potan had a *lathi* with him and beat Khooroo with it, as a result of which Khooroo's right arm was fractured.

Khooroo took the case to the Gram Sabha, which condemned Potan Ahir's high-handedness and commanded him to pay Rs. 10 to Khooroo to meet his medical expenses. But Potan would not be put down by the Gram Sabha. So he took the matter to the Adalat Panchayat. However, the *Sarpanch* of the Adalat Panchayat said that the verdict of the Gram Sabha was just, and so the case could not be taken up by the Adalat Panchayat. He further said that it was too small a matter to be judged in the Adalat Panchayat.

(An interesting point for speculation obtained from the *Sarpanch* of the Adalat Panchayat Kandion is that a great number of the

cases brought to him are from Kandion, while cases from Mohana are very few. He also complained that *panch* from Mohana are rather indifferent to the activities of the Panchayat. Perhaps this is because their village is involved so rarely in the Panchayat activities. Perhaps the peace prevailing in Mohana is due to the simple unsophisticated nature of the villagers—in Kandion there are many so-called educated people, unlike in Mohana; or is it due to the blessing of the Sati ?)

LEADERSHIP

No doubt, one would be interested to know what sort of people are elected as officials in these various judicial bodies, and what causes contribute to the prestige of the recognised leaders of the village. There are many qualities, praiseworthy and otherwise, by the possession of which a man may earn for himself a position in which he commands the respect and obedience of those around him. Wealth, age, intelligence, honesty, kindness, being born of a good family, all these and several other factors make a man important. But all these qualities are rarely possessed by one person, and neither are they all essential hallmarks of popularity. For instance a man may be poor and yet be respected because of his intelligence or honesty, or else a man leads a wanton life but others look up to him because he is rich. Perhaps the best way to know what makes a villager eminent is to pick out a few of the recognised village leaders and see why others respect them.

1. *D.* 5. He is a Brahmin by caste, and is a *panch* of the Adalat Panchayat. He was once very rich, but his wealth was ill-spent, and now he cannot be called a rich man. He spent large amounts on prostitutes. He also lent out large sums, and did not care to recover them. He is very sober and reserved; does not interfere in any quarrels unless his opinion is invited. Thus he is respected because of his birth, and his policy of non-interference. Also when he was rich he helped those in need and looked for no reward. He is the oldest Brahmin in the village and is supposed to be an experienced man. In addition to these causes, he is held in high esteem by virtue of his office as the village priest.

2. *M. Singh* (*a Thakur*). He owns 30 *bighas* of agricultural land,

two cows and two bullocks. He also owns a big though *kachcha* house, with two spacious courtyards and some land in front of it. With enough money at his disposal, he is able to lend out large sums at interest of two pice per rupee per month. His yearly income from this source is about Rs. 200. At present he has lent money to several villagers who are not able to pay even the interest, but he does not mind it. He does not press a man too much for payment of either the loan or interest, if he is badly off. Generally money-lenders are not thus large-hearted. Explaining his leniency towards debtors, he says, 'When a man has gained prestige and respect with the help of his money, he should not be greedy—money just flows into his hands, and flows out of them as quickly.'

There can be no doubt about the popularity of such a man, yet he holds a humble opinion of himself and says he has done no good, but the other people say that he wrongs none, except himself by his indulgence in certain vices. People respect him for his influence with the police, and for his wealth, but most of all, for his willingness to help anyone in trouble.

3. *D. Singh* (*Sarpanch of Gram Sabha Amarpur*). He, with his three brothers, owns 60 *bighas* of agricultural land and three houses. If the crop is good, he can lend out about Rs. 500 at the most. There is not much to say about him where wealth is concerned. But then he is a striking person. He is always seen in simple but clean clothes. He makes many contacts and friendships which at some later date would be useful to him. Otherwise he is suspicious, with no faith in others. He is known to accept bribes, and some people criticise him bitterly for this. In spite of these drawbacks, he has certain inherent qualities. It does not matter to him whether a debt is repaid or not, because he himself spends a lot of money in drinking and merry-making and on prostitutes. He is of the opinion that if a man's debt to him is cancelled, he would be under obligation to him throughout life, and that if a debt is not paid now, he will have to pay the same in his next life. Thus with his wealth is combined generosity.

He is always willing to help others and would use even illegal means to alleviate the troubles of those who seek his aid. Police officials are his friends, for he greases their palms well. Thus, outlaws, thieves and robbers often escape the stern hands of the

law, through his help. He entertains these undesirable people in his house, but never takes an active part in their doings, though he claims a share of their booty for helping them to escape the police. If he is called up by the police in connection with any robbery, he has no fear, for he can escape scot-free. An adept card-player, he sometimes wins as much as Rs. 400-500 a day by this means. He started gambling when he was 12 years old, and says that he has always been lucky at it. Never once has he been arrested for gambling and he has no fear on that score. A happy-go-lucky man, he talks very little, but whenever he talks, he speaks so convincingly and clearly that he is listened to with much respect. Generally he keeps aloof in controversial problems, but as a village leader he cannot completely wash his hands off all such matters. In deciding cases and settling quarrels, he is impartial and disinterested—whether in earnest or pretence, one cannot say decisively. The villagers supported him unanimously in the elections, and since becoming the *Sarpanch*, his prestige has greatly increased. Another quality in him is that when he helps someone he does it in such a way that the recipient of his help feels obliged to him and respects him. Being the *Sarpanch* he has ample chances of winning others' respect this way.

4. *B. Singh and M. Singh*. They are brothers, not very rich but quite influential in the village. In general they are honest, straightforward and helpful but if rubbed on the wrong side, they can be dangerous. A few years back they are alleged to have killed a Baniya of Kutua, from whom they had taken a loan, and who, thinking them to be ignorant, tried to cheat them. For this act they underwent a few years' rigorous imprisonment, then were enlisted as soldiers in the Second World War, and at the close of it returned to the village, all the more courageous and dashing. At Panchayat meetings they stand up for truth. They never wrong the simple and innocent, nor do they resort to improper means in dealing with anyone, unless they are provoked. They have friends among thieves and gangsters, and hence have a strong force at their beck and call, but they never use this influence against the weak and unprotected villagers. It is for this reason that they are admired and esteemed in the village, for it is a first-rate quality in a man to have much power and yet act with restraint and justice.

5. *P. Singh.* He is a young man of about 36, tall, good-looking and healthy, and is a *panch* of the Gram Sabha. He is a very prosperous Thakur, owning 30 *bighas* of land, a few mango trees, a few *Jamun* trees, a big house, one buffalo, two cows and two bullocks. He has enough money to give a loan to anyone at any time, yet he leads a simple life without any pomp or show. He treats all men alike, whether rich or poor; respects the elders and loves the youngsters. Very jolly and good at heart he maintains cordial relations with everyone in the village and outside. An upright man he is, with a strong sense of justice. Everyone in the village is his friend, and he crowns all these admirable qualities with his impressive bearing.

6. *R-Pasi* (*a* panch *of the Gram Sabha*). He is the most influential among the Pasis. Judging from the standards of the Pasis, he is economically well off, having amongst his possessions a pair of bullocks and a chaff-cutting machine. He does not have to borrow money from anyone, unless some unforseen mishap befalls him.

R-Pasi is known for his frankness and bold expression of opinions. He is honest and sticks to what he says. He was the last of the Pasis to give up the fight against the Thakurs for the right to wear the *janeu* (the sacred thread). He can be trusted with any amount of money and any confidential matters. Even the Thakurs give him due respect and the Thakur children address him in kinship terms. He is about 50, medium in stature and fair in complexion. His hairs are grey, so is his beard, but his limbs are strong, so that he is the picture of experience and strength. In conversation he is intelligent, good-humoured and well-behaved, though he has a temper which when kindled might well prove dangerous.

7. *K-Barhai.* Aged 40, he is a *panch* of the Gram Sabha. Economically very well off, he has in his possession 35 *bighas* of agricultural land, two pairs of bullocks, two ploughs, a big house, a cattle shed, a bullock cart, a cow, two buffaloes, a chaff-cutter and a host of other things, some of which are not owned even by Thakurs. This speaks volumes for his wealth. Though rich he is not proud. He helps those in need, and to add to his charm, he helps them secretly. He is good-natured, gentle and honest. Often he is called upon to officiate at the Barhai panchayat held in the

absence of the *Chowdhry*, but he never interferes in others' affairs unless invited to do so.

Though honoured by his caste-people, he never goes against the wishes of the Thakur, so that he is respected in the higher circles also. He often lends his cart and bullocks to the Thakur. But where there is praise there is blame also. Thus there are some who call K-Barhai a flatterer, and others say that he once tried to seduce a woman when she was alone without any help at hand; but in general he is regarded as intelligent, well-behaved, reliable, peace-loving and honest.

8. *C-Chamar* (*a* panch *of the Gram Sabha*). It appears that he became a *panch* only because of his permanent support to the Thakur. The Thakur say that he is honest and good natured and some of the Chamar also say so, but there are a few Chamar who criticise him. The fact is that C-Chamar is very particular about pleasing the Thakur. C-Chamar is short of stature and weak in health, but he has a good memory and is a recognised singer in his community. On the whole he is regarded by the villagers as an honest, good-natured and uninterfering man. Judged from the standards of Chamar his economic position is tolerably good.

9. *Dr. M.* A doctor, he is also an ex-zamindar of Mohana, and so when time and circumstance permit, he pays a visit to the village. Though a non-resident of the village, he is quite popular there. When he is in Mohana, the villagers, children and adults, crowd around him, for he is interested in their manifold problems. If someone is ill, he is brought to Dr. M., and the latter gives him helpful advice. If one wishes to be admitted to a hospital, Dr. M.'s help can always be relied upon. But it is not in the medical field alone that he can help the villagers. He is a peace-maker, and the villagers bring their quarrels to him. If police help is necessary, he does the needful to secure it. Further he makes enquiries about their fields and animals and talks on any subject that would interest the villagers. He has knowledge, wealth, status, power, and above all a genuine interest in the villagers, though he himself lives in the town.

Thus various factors go to make a man influential, and several causes lie behind the appointment of the village leaders, who mete out justice or injustice in the village, as the case may be. The

leaders, though they quarrel among themselves, contribute much to the solidarity and unity of the village. There are a few instances when quarrels and disputes prove too much for the leaders to settle, or some of the people involved in the cases live in areas which are outside the jurisdiction of the panchayats, and hence the cases have to be taken to court. Such cases are illustrated below.

1. *The case of the daughter of M. Halwai.* The daughter of M. Halwai was married to a man who was living in Daliganj, Lucknow. While she was at her father's place she had illicit relations with Nanda Ahir of Lalpur hamlet. Nanda used to present her with many gold ornaments. It is believed that her husband knew of this relationship, but kept quiet because of the wealth that was pouring into his house through this affair. The woman, not satisfied with the love of two men, must needs have a third man to love and honour her (if such a woman could be honoured). This man was a constable, Prashad by name, of the neighbouring Police Station. When Nanda heard of this liaison, he was furious and beat the girl mercilessly. Prashad could not do anything to help the girl at that time. He however persuaded her husband to urge the father to change his residence, for the house in which they lived was close to the house of Nanda. On the persuasion of his son-in-law and the constable, the Halwai changed his house. Taking advantage of the new surroundings and the Halwai's lack of knowledge of the new locality, Prashad eloped with the girl. The Halwai and Nanda combined in the search for the girl and found her living with the constable in Gonda. When the case was brought up for trial, the girl stated that her husband treated her very unkindly and ultimately gave her the freedom to go and live anywhere she liked. So she chose to live in Gonda and earned her livelihood there. She denied being seduced by the constable and said that she had nothing to do with him. She requested the court to grant her permission to live where she liked. Since the case against her could not be proved in court, it granted her request. Nothing was found to incriminate the constable and so he was let off. It is said that ultimately the girl married the constable and is living with him in Gonda.

2. *Kurai Singh* vs. *Baran Singh.* In 1951 Durga Singh, Kurai

Singh's father, mortgaged a piece of land to Charan Singh. After the death of his father, Kurai Singh paid the requisite amount of money to Baran Singh, son of Charan Singh, in order to get back his land. In the mean time the abolition of the zamindari system was effected in the State. Baran Singh deposited ten time the rent of that land to acquire its Bhumidhari rights. Kurai Singh, having paid for the release of the land, asserted his claim over it. Baran challenged Kurai to justify his claim in the court of law and he leased out the land to two people. Kurai Singh approached the Area Development Officer who asked him to file a suit in the court of the District Collector. However the A.D.O. said the land legally belonged to Baran. Infuriated by this remark, Kurai went to the plot in question and made arrangements to plough it. On a complaint from Baran, a Police Inspector ordered Kurai Singh to remove his men and plough from the field. Kurai Singh then filed a suit and got possession of the land in a month's time through the court of the Tahsildar. It appears that Kurai Singh made a mistake in straight away announcing his ownership of the land. He should have acquired Bhumidhari rights, got his mortgage deed back and then notified the orders of his ownership. His failure to do so gave Baran the chance to appeal to the Deputy Commissioner. In his appeal, he stated that either the money which he deposited to earn Bhumidhari rights should be returned to him, or he should be declared the rightful owner of that land. The Deputy Commissioner decided the case in Baran's favour. Kurai's ignorance of the intricacies of law cost him his land.

3. *A case of dacoity.* A dacoity took place at the house of Phani Ahir in the village Balak in August 1954. Six or seven dacoits, armed with *lathis* and *karaulis* (daggers), raided the house at midnight on the 9th. The dacoits got on to the roof by means of a bullock cart standing in the verandah. On entering the house they stole all ornaments and many of the household articles. The inmates woke up and seeing the dacoits raised cries of alarm. The villagers rushed to the place. All the dacoits but one managed to escape. The captured dacoit was severely beaten by the villagers till he was unconscious. When he regained consciousness he was compelled to give the names of the other dacoits and the whereabouts of the stolen goods. He said that the stolen property could

be had from *Agha-mir-ki-durshi* near City Station in Lucknow.

In the morning, the people handed over the dacoit to the police, and also gave his statement of the stolen goods. The case was registered but no action was taken. The villagers are of the opinion that the police had taken a bribe.

4. *Karan Singh, Sahadev Singh and Bir Singh* vs. *Prasad Ahir.* The quarrel is over a piece of land, and it was taken to the Tahsildar, who decided the case in favour of Prasad Ahir. The other party then appealed to the court of the Commissioner. In this connection Nath Singh had to appear in court in his capacity as the village *Sarpanch.* The hearing was on September 14, 1954. J. Nath Singh was of the opinion that the disputed plot belonged to Karan and his brothers. It had belonged to that family for a very long time, and they had always cultivated it. Prasad had never cultivated that plot, for it had not at any time belonged to him. The decision of the Commissioner's court is not yet known.

5. *Dr. M.* vs. *Bir Singh.* This case is over a mango grove. The facts of the case are that the grove belonged to Din Singh, Onkar Singh and Prasad Singh. Onkar Singh sold his share consisting of about eight trees to a zamindar, who owned 78% of the village land. The trees were sold at a nominal price.

When Onkar Singh died childless, all his property passed to Bir and Karan, the grandsons of Din Singh. So Bir claimed the mango grove also, which was sold to the zamindar and which had passed into the possession of his grandson, Dr. M. One day Bir Singh, accompanied by many Thakurs of Mohana and Amarpur, was in the grove to have his claim over it recognised. At that time Jodh Singh was in the service of Dr. M. Further, as has already been stated, Jodh and Bir were never on friendly terms, and this was a good chance for Jodh to cause trouble to Bir. He sent the Pasi to the police outpost in Kandion to report about Bir's illegal plucking of the mangoes and also asked him to inform Dr. M. of the affair. Jodh Singh himself went to the village to collect some supporters. He collected about 40 people, most of them Pasi, Ahir, and Chamar, and went to the grove. When Bir and his men saw them coming they, being armed with lathis and spears, prepared to attack them. Jodh Singh who is a very shrewd man prevented an open fight, but argued with them and kept his opponents busy

talking, thus letting the time pass. Soon the police reached the spot. This was what Jodh Singh was looking forward to. Bir's men, numbering about 150, tried to run away on seeing the police, but some of them, including Bir and his brother Karan, were arrested and sent to the Kandion police outpost. All the plucked mangoes were recovered from Bir. Later, all those who were arrested were released on bail. Dr. M. who arrived late registered a case of theft at the police outpost.

Even after two years the case could not be settled in the criminal court. Bir, defending himself for plucking the mangoes, put forward the plea that the grove was sold to Dr. M.'s grandfather for a very nominal sum, and that Dr. M. had enjoyed the profits of the grove amounting to from ten to twelve times the cost. He further stated that he and his brother had taken the crop for themselves for the last two years and hence they should be declared the rightful owners. It appears that the seasonal crop was sometimes taken by Dr. M. and sometimes by Bir.

The case has been transferred from the criminal court to the civil court. The Gram Sabha is also expected to take it up. But still the case has not been settled and in the matter of enjoying the produce of the grove, the policy of 'first come, first served' is followed. So each claimant always tries to be ahead of the other in plucking the yield. Sometimes the one is successful, sometimes the other. Last year Dr. M. sold the yield.

6. *Alsi* vs. *Dukhan.* Two wild cows and their calves often used to graze in the fields of Alsi and Dukhan. One day Alsi suggested that they should catch the calves and keep them for themselves. But in this they had to be careful for Hari knew of their plans and he was a well-known telltale and there was every chance that he would sneak to the police. Dukhan however coaxed Hari not to meddle in this affair. The arrangement between Alsi and Dukhan was that they should together capture the calves and then each take a calf as his own. The next day the calves were captured—Hira, Durga, and Shivdin helping Alsi and Shitla and Narpat helping Dukhan; this is according to Dukhan's statement. But Alsi said that Dukhan did not help him catch the calves, but only lent his ropes to be used and as such he had no claims on any of the calves which were left at Alsi's place. Both of them were prepared to

take oaths in the name of Gangaji and reaffirm their statements. When two days had elapsed during which period Dukhan had been supplying fodder to the calves and yet Alsi refused to hand over one calf to him, he went to Hari for help. Hari advised him to continue the supply of fodder. After a few days Alsi told Dukhan that he cannot have a calf because those who helped him (Alsi) to catch the calves wanted a share.

The case was taken before Dr. M., Nath, the village headman and a few Thakurs. But this time the situation had taken a slightly different turn. Dukhan, like Alsi, claimed both the calves and yet neither of them was caring for the calves properly. After hearing both sides of the case, Dr. M. said that since the calves were being starved, due to their difference of opinion, they should either be set free in the jungle or be handed over to him. Dukhan interfered and said that he wanted both the calves. Dr. M. was losing his temper, for both had promised to abide by his verdict; and he threatened them with serious consequences. Again they promised to accept his decision. This time the verdict was that they should come to a mutual agreement or else the calves would be taken either by himself or by Nath Singh. Soon after the verdict was given, Alsi and Dukhan fell out again reasserting their claims in loud tones. The wisest thing would have been for them to take one calf each and not let a third party snatch them away. But fools as they were, they would not come to agreement between themselves and the leaders failed hopelessly to bring about a compromise.

Hari appeared on the scene again. He had never liked Dr. M. though he admitted that the verdict was just and reasonable. He and Alsi had not been on friendly terms for a while, for once Alsi had beaten his servant, because his cattle had entered Alsi's fields. Now seeing an opportunity of taking revenge on Alsi, he loudly proclaimed that his job was to help the police to get hold of all bad characters in the village. Whether he informed the police of the case or not is not known, but the case has been reported to the police.

The police do not seem to have done anything about the matter. But Dr. M. one day sent Jodh Singh, Chedda Pasi, Dukh Pasi, Makhana Chamar and Nanha Chamar to fetch one of the calves.

This calf is with Dr. M. and the other is still with Alsi, and Dukhan has not had his share so far.

7. Here is a longstanding case, interesting at times, repellent at other times, which could not be settled by panchayats and leaders and hence had to be taken to court. It is a story of great length, wound round the illegal love that Sitab Chamar of Mohana bore and expressed for the step-sister of his brother's mother-in-law, something that could not be tolerated even by a people whose moral standards are not high, for to them one's mother-in-law's step-sister is as closely connected to one as one's mother-in-law herself, and one's brother's mother-in-law is like one's own mother-in-law, and one's mother-in-law is the same as one's mother. To make a long statement short, Sitab fell in love with a woman who was as closely related to him as his own mother. It was incest and broke the sanctity of all family ties.

Sitab Chamar has two brothers, Kanhey and Madloo. Madloo is the younger of the two and was married in Karail village. There was no male member in his wife's family, and therefore Madloo was invited by his mother-in-law to live there and manage the agricultural affairs of the family. But Sitab Chamar, being the eldest and head of the family to which Madloo belonged, did not allow Madloo to live in Karail and he himself took charge of the work which Madloo had to do. Thus Sitab paid occasional visits to Karail village to look after the fields. In this connection he had sometimes to stay there for several weeks. This gave Sitab and Madloo's mother-in-law ample chance to have an illegal friendship with each other, but their love had to stop with secret meetings and whispered conversations, for Sitab could not run away with her since she was in charge of the house, fields, etc. To a man of Sitab's amorous nature, it was not difficult to transfer his love from one woman to another. Seeing that he could not have his brother's mother-in-law, he lost no time in transferring his affections to her step-sister. This affair continued for several months and finally she agreed to accompany him, anywhere. In the month of *Kartik* (Oct.-Nov.) 1953, both of them left Karail for Mohana.

Sitab has a scheming brain and he thought out a way whereby Bilasa (that is the woman's name) could be kept in hiding. He

dug a pit in his *haata* (a place where the cattle are kept) big enough for Bilasa to stay in and covered the mouth of the pit with a *karhaa* (a big saucepan which is used for boiling sugarcane juice to make *gur*), so that anyone looking at it might think it was just a vessel lying there. He succeeded in keeping her hidden thus for eight months. Sitab gave her food and drink at night or at noon when no one was about the place. The woman came out only late in the night, and during the day she remained inside the pit.

This state of affairs could not always remain hidden. Eight months after the elopement, the cat was let out of the bag, for one day, Sokaran Chamar's wife, going to Sitab's house late in the evening, saw a strange woman there and announced it to all the villagers. Sitab in his turn accused Sokaran's wife of stealing one of the ornaments of his wife (i.e. legal wife). The fact, once made known, could no longer be kept secret. Village gossips were busy and the village leaders felt it was their duty to look into the matter. So Jodh Singh and Maharaj Singh went to Sitab's house to find out the real facts of the case. As soon as they went near the house Jodh Singh guessed the whereabouts of the woman and he asked Maharaj to remove the *karhaa*. When it was removed Maharaj put his foot inside and felt something move. He declared that there was someone inside. Sitab, seeing no other alternative, asked Bilasa to come out. Every villager was interested not only to look at the woman, but also to peep into the pit in which she had remained hidden. The Chamar caste-panchayat met and declared Sitab to be an outcaste, but Sitab did not care.

Sokaran had reported to the *pradhan* about Sitab's false accusation against his wife of having stolen the ornament. The *pradhan* sent for Sitab and severely reprimanded him for making false charges. But this was only a minor matter, for the whole village was up and against the man who had run away with a woman who was almost a mother to him. Jodh Singh and Baran Singh pointed out to Sitab that since he was married and had a son, he should abandon Bilasa. No, come what may, Sitab would keep her. He was adamant. A fortnight later, Sitab's wife went away to her parental home with her son and would not return. Sitab had, all these days, very cunningly prevented his wife from going to the *haata* where Bilasa was hidden, by frightening her that a

churail resided there. Now when the facts came to light, she left her husband.

Some time later, Jodh Singh asked Sitab whether he was really eager to keep Bilasa with him, to which Sitab replied that it was his greatest desire and that if Jodh Singh could help him, he would be grateful to him throughout his life. So, Jodh Singh took both of them to Lucknow and filed an application at Roshan-ud-Daula Court on behalf of Bilasa. The gist of the application was that since Bilasa's husband was cruel to her and beat her, she left him and accompanied Sitab Chamar of her own accord. After filing this application, Sitab thought himself to be on safe ground, but none of his fellow caste-men were willing to support him. According to them, though irregular unions and illegal relations were not uncommon among the Chamar, Sitab's act was intolerable. Three more months passed by and the case was getting to be in the background, though still people of different castes discussed it and condemned Sitab for his unbecoming act.

In the beginning of September 1954, Sitab came to know that Bilasa's sister's husband had met the Chamar of the village with the intention of getting their help to take away Bilasa, and the Chamar were ready to support him. This was planned to take place on the night of September 13. Sitab, realising his helpless state, took Bilasa (who was now his wife) with him to Bir for help. While he was at Bir's house, his pursuers tracked him down there and one of them beat him. On seeing this, Bir intervened and scolded them for treating Sitab in this manner. The Chamar, not wishing to oppose a Thakur, drew back, but threatened to get police help in the matter. Bir promised to help Sitab, but Sitab's mind was still not at ease. So he went to Baran Singh. It was about midnight. He fell at Baran's feet and pleaded for help. Baran, seeing Sitab's helplessness, assured him of his help and advised him and his wife to pass the night in his maize field.

The next day Baran talked the matter over with Jodh who was also willing to help Sitab. Jodh Singh asked Hari Ahir of Jhalva, who is a police informant, to settle Sitab's case. Jodh Singh thought he could take advantage of the situation and get some money out of Sitab. So, on September 15, he told Murari Singh and a few other Thakur that the previous day a constable of the

Kandion Police Court commanded him and Hari Ahir to present themselves in the police court in connection with Sitab's case. Hari, it appeared, was not willing to go to the court. So Jodh Singh asked Sitab to persuade Hari to go to court. Sitab however was quite indifferent to the matter and this angered the Thakur, who now thought that they had degraded themselves by being entangled in the affairs of the low caste people, but they also realised that having got themselves entangled in the case, it would affect their prestige further if they did not keep their promises to Sitab.

The next morning Madloo and Nanhey approached the Thakur, and asked for a complete separation from their brother Sitab, but this the Thakur said could not be done. Jodh and Baran were very hard on Sitab. They asked him to give them money to please the police authorities, but Dulari was of the opinion that no constable from Kandion had called on Jodh, and that he had concocted a story to pinch money out of Sitab. Jodh further added that the Gram Sabha should levy a fine of Rs. 51 on Sitab and use that money to repair the school-building or build a *deothan* for Bhooian; the Chamar *biradari* had also imposed a fine on Sitab.

Sitab was willing to pay all these fines but then another trouble cropped up. The Chamar of Karail village, resenting Sitab's behaviour, did not permit Madloo's wife to go and live with her husband. This made the rift between Sitab and Madloo greater. Madloo sought the help of Jodh and Murari, who both, with Madloo, went to Karail to get Madloo's wife back. There they met a Congressman named Babu Lal, who promised to get the woman for them. Babu Lal had a private talk with Jodh Singh, the gist of which, according to Jodh, is that Babu Lal wanted Rs. 50 in return for which he would anyhow let Madloo have his wife on the following Sunday. Madloo managed to collect Rs. 50 and deposited the sum with Jodh Singh. On Sunday, Madloo went to Karail in the hope of getting his wife, but had to return disappointed. Jodh Singh said he gave Rs. 45 to Babu Lal who had now cheated them, but Murari said that Jodh would have spent the money and not given a pie to Babu Lal. Whatever that may be, poor Madloo lost his wife and also Rs. 50.

On October 12 a relative of Bilasa's called upon Sitab, and

demanded of him all the ornaments that Bilasa took with her at the time of elopement. Sitab handed over the ornaments. At the same time Bilasa's relatives filed a suit against Sitab at the Bara Banki court, accusing him of kidnapping Bilasa. On the evening of the 14th, four constables from Kandion went to Mohana with warrants against Sitab, Bilasa, Madloo and Nanhey. At that time Sitab and Bilasa were working in the fields of Murari Singh. When they heard of the constables, they ran away. Madloo and Nanhey were arrested in their house. Lalltoo Pasi, the ex-*chaukidar* of the village was sent to look for Sitab and Bilasa. He succeeded in getting hold of Bilasa and took her to the constables. When Sitab heard of the arrest of his wife, he again approached Jodh and Murari for help. All three of them went to the constables. Jodh and Murari asked the constables to release the four arrested people on bail. The constables agreed to do so after taking a bribe of Rs. 12. A number of Thakurs and other villagers had assembled on the spot. For each of the arrested persons a surety of Rs. 1,000 had to be given by those standing bail for him. Jodh and Murari stood surety for Sitab, Dewan Pasi and Chotan Chamar for Bilasa, Neerha and Mauku Chamar for Nanhey, and Bhagat and Kalloo Chamar for Madloo. So each of the bailsmen had to produce Rs. 500. Then the constables showed them the summons, according to which they had to present themselves at the Bara Banki court on October 16, i.e. the next day. They were surprised to see the summons, for after being taken on bail, they expected Sitab to be free.

Sitab found himself in a difficult situation for he was penniless. He borrowed Rs. 32 from Jodh Singh. He was further afraid that if his wife went to Bara Banki, the opposite party might take her away by force. So, on the next day, when Sitab, Madloo, Nanhey and their bailsmen proceeded to Bara Banki they did not take Bilasa with them. They engaged a lawyer from Lucknow. On Jodh's advice, Sitab put forward a plea for the absence of his wife which was due to his fear of her being snatched away by his enemies, and he promised the court that at the next hearing he would bring his wife.

The next hearing fell on or about November 2. This time Sitab borrowed some money from Badlu Nai. On the advice of Jodh

and Murari, Sitab asked for a police guard for his wife. The request was granted and Bilasa was escorted to court by the police. At this hearing the statements of Sitab and Bilasa were recorded. The date for the hearing of witnesses was fixed for November 23.

At this stage, Sitab again needed money. He had borrowed all he could otherwise and the only thing he could do was to mortgage his lands. It meant that a division of the family property had to be effected, and this was done by the Gram Sabha on the 18th. Two *bighas* fell to Sitab's share and he mortgaged the land to Jodh Singh and Badlu Nai for Rs. 150. On the date of hearing, Sitab, Bilasa, Jodh, Murari, Dewan Pasi and Chotan Chamar went to court. This time Bilasa had no police guard. As they left the court, the opposite party tried to take Bilasa by force and this led to a clash between the two groups. Though Bilasa escaped being taken, Dewan Pasi and Chotan Chamar were taken into police custody, for the clash took place very close to the court. Jodh opined that the other group had bribed the police to have these two arrested. Dewan Pasi and Chotan Chamar were kept in detention for about a week, after which period Bir Singh and Baran Singh went to Bara Banki and managed to get them released by offering a bribe to the police authorities.

On coming to the village, Dewan Pasi and Chotan Ahir were expelled from their community by their caste panchayats for they had been imprisoned, so they had to arrange their *biradari* feasts. Thus disgraced by being taken into police custody and by being ostracised from their community, Dewan Pasi and Chotan Ahir decided to withdraw their securities and to remain aloof. The next hearing was fixed for December 9, before which date there had been a few quarrels between Sitab on the one side and Dewan and Chotan on the other. On the evening of the 8th, the quarrel had been of a rather pungent nature. Dewan and Chotan threatened to withdraw their securities the next day.

On the morning of the 9th, Sitab and Bilasa left for Bara Banki with the intention, as they said, of reporting at court. They were followed by Murari, Jodh, Dewan, Chotan and all others connected with the case. But Sitab did not make his appearance at the court. Bilasa too was absent. The others waited for them the whole day,

only to realise in the end—what they had all along suspected but refused to admit—that Sitab and his wife had run away, thus putting them into more trouble. Dewan and Chotan returned to the village the same evening. These two and many of the other villagers firmly believed that Jodh Singh was at the back of Sitab's and Bilasa's flight. They condemned Jodh Singh as a man whose actions were motivated by self-interest. Many angry words were uttered about Sitab also. Jodh and Murari returned to the village only the next morning. When Jodh came to know of the charges levelled against him by Dewan and Chotan, he accused them of making Sitab run away by threatening to withdraw their securities. They were fools, he added, and did not know the right procedure in such intricate matters. The best thing would have been not to have intimated Sitab of their intention but to have applied in the court for a withdrawal of their securities.

For about a week, Sitab's disappearance was discussed by the villagers. They tried to guess his whereabouts, and opinions on this were diverse, but more or less everyone agreed on the point that Jodh's hand was at the back of it. Jodh and Murari were not in the least worried about Sitab's absence. They were cock-sure that he would present himself at the next hearing. But not so Dewan and Chotan. They worried themselves about Sitab's flight, and not knowing what else to do, went to Sitab's mother and brothers. Sitab's mother went to Jodh Singh for help. He assured her that Sitab would be present at the next hearing.

Another summons was served in that month, but still Sitab did not appear in court. Dewan and Chotan were more disturbed than before and now Murari and Jodh too did not know what to do. It was decided that they should seek him out, for otherwise they would lose their securities. Another week passed in suspense and waiting. Misunderstandings between Jodh and Dewan were increasing. On December 26, at the request of Dewan and Chotan, the Gram Sabha met. They asked the other villagers to cooperate in the search for Sitab. They told the Panchayat that Sitab's family should be penalised for not revealing his place of refuge. But Sitab's family asserted their ignorance of his whereabouts. Dewan and Chotan demanded monetary help from Sitab's brothers to find him. This again could not be given.

Another summons was served in January. Again, no Sitab in court. In the mean while Dewan and Chotan took Hari Ahir of Jhabua into their confidence. They felt that as a police-informant he would be of help to them, but it only resulted in a wider rift between Hari and the Thakurs of Mohana who generally were never on good terms.

On January 26, a Sub-Inspector of Police and three constables went to Mohana to take all the possessions of Sitab into custody. His household articles were taken into custody, but were later left behind when Maharaj Singh stood security for them.

Two months had passed since Sitab and Bilasa were missing. Dewan Pasi and Chotan Chamar went to several places looking for them. Jodh and Murari, being Thakurs, thought it below their dignity to go in search of a Chamar and his wife, but they requested the Thakur of the neighbouring villages to inform them if they got any news of Sitab's whereabouts. One day in the beginning of February it was rumoured that Sitab visited the village on a certain night and met Murari Singh in his house. When Dewan Pasi questioned Murari Singh about this, the latter replied that there was not an atom of truth in the rumour, but Dewan Pasi was not willing to believe Murari. So there was a heated argument between them.

A summons was served on Jodh, Murari, Dewan Pasi and Chotan Chamar. Jodh and Murari also now realised the gravity of the situation. So when they attended the court, they requested a fortnight's time within which period they hoped to find Sitab. A fortnight passed, three weeks passed—still no Sitab, no Bilasa! On February 25, the four bailsmen had to go to court again. They requested the court for another 14 days' time. Jodh and Murari decided to handle the matter in a different way. They contacted the opposite party and requested them to withdraw the case. They convinced them that if the case was not withdrawn they would never find the woman, for which purpose they had filed the case. All that would happen would be the bailsmen forfeiting their securities, and then the case would be dismissed. Under these circumstances, neither of the parties would gain anything. But if the case was withdrawn, then Jodh promised to give them Rs. 500. As soon as Sitab came into the picture again, they could

file a suit against him. The *vakil* of the opposite party also convinced them of the advantages of withdrawing the case and they agreed to the proposal. The five-hundred rupees which Jodh promised to pay the opposite party had to be contributed by all four—Jodh, Murari, Dewan and Chotan—with each one contributing Rs. 125. The next hearing was due on March 11, by which time Rs. 500 had to be paid to the opposite party, and then the case would be withdrawn.

The amicable settlement reached by the two parties was after all not easy to put into practice, for even at the second hearing, after the agreement had been made, Dewan Pasi and Chotan Ahir could not produce their share of Rs. 125 each. Thus the case went on, and the bailsmen requested more time.

In the mean time, on March 28, one of Sitab's bulls died. The Gausai Chamar refused to remove the carcass of an animal which belonged to an outcaste. So Sitab's mother and his brother Nanhey approached Jodh Singh, Baran Singh and Nath Singh for help. These Thakurs asked Lekhai Chamar to remove the dead bull. He was not willing to do so and went to Jahua to consult Hari Ahir in this matter. On his return to the village, he showed no willingness to obey the Thakur, but the latter forced him and a few other Chamar to remove the dead animal.

The interest of the villagers which was centred on Sitab's dead bull, at the end of March, at the beginning of the next month reverted to Sitab, for on April 2, Sitab and his new wife were seen in Gola Ganj, Lucknow, by Sheo Ram, a Nai of Mohana, who has a milk-shop opposite Christian College in Gola Ganj. Sheo Ram called out to Sitab, who made an attempt to run away. So Sheo Ram raised a cry and the other people thinking Sitab was a thief caught him and his wife and handed them over to Sheo Ram. Sitab pleaded with him to let them go and not to inform the villagers about having seen them. But the Nai said 'No', and bound them with ropes. He also kept guard over them. At 3 p. m., he went to the village and informed the bailsmen of Sitab and his wife. Great was the excitement in the village. The bailsmen rushed to Lucknow, and in the evening took the culprits, man and wife, to Mohana. All the villagers flocked to see them. A volley of questions was aimed at Sitab, who replied that he hid himself for

fear of the police, and since the time of his departure from Mohana had led a vagabond's life, sometimes in Lucknow and sometimes in Kanpur.

The bailsmen, made wise by experience, decided to keep a watch over Sitab and his wife. Dewan Pasi took upon himself the responsibility of guarding them, and they stayed in his house. The bailsmen had to appear in court on April 14 and they took Sitab and his wife with them, hoping that since Sitab was there, they could wash their hands off the whole matter. The court asked Sitab to produce some security. He could not do so. He was to be tried on April 22 on which day the bailsmen went to court with high hopes of getting themselves freed from this intricate affair into which they had foolishly entered, but the trial was postponed to April 28.

On April 24, the *Lekhpal* called on the bailsmen to verify their property which was stated in the security bond. This had the bailsmen shaking in their shoes, for they did not understand why their property should be checked. Murari Singh was of the opinion that they might be fined for letting Sitab escape, for a *vakil* had rebuked them for not having shouldered their responsibility properly. But Jodh Singh cheered them saying that the checking of bailsmen's property was a normal procedure.

(The case is still not over, and its hearing has been postponed several times.)

Bribery. Bribery is on the increase not only in cities but in villages also. Generally, both the giver and the acceptor of bribes are to be blamed, but this rule cannot always be applied in cases of bribery in villages, for the villagers who give bribes do not realise it to be wrong. Besides this there are other justifications. For instance, anyone wanting any information regarding his lands can get it from the *Lekhpal* who goes to the village once a week or so. The *Lekhpal* demands three or four rupees to show the land records. The villagers realise that it is wrong to give any gratification to the *Lekhpal*, for they know that he is paid by the Government for this work, but then, if they do not give the *Lekhpal* a bribe, he will not show them the records, and they will have to go to the Tehsil headquarters to see the records for themselves, and to go there they will have to spend more than four rupees. Most of the villa-

gers are poor. So they would rather pay four rupees to the *Lekhpal*. Many are the officials besides the *Lekhpal* who take bribes from the villagers. There is the *Pradhan* of the Gram Sabha with whom is left the Register of Agricultural Taxes. The tax-collector himself exploits the ignorant villagers and if, desiring to know the implications of the tax or the rate of tax levied on them, they approach the *Pradhan*, he charges them another rupee or two. The *Pradhan* himself confesses that he takes bribes, but adds that the money he gets thus is just sufficient for him to buy betel and cigarettes, but others opine that he makes good money by this means.

Police constables, whose honourable duty it is to prevent corruption of any sort, show no hesitation in accepting bribes. Many cases are hushed up because the criminal presses a few rupees into the palms of a police constable. When the villagers take their melons to Lucknow in carts, they usually go at night, and often they fail to have lights on their carts. This is against traffic rules, but the police let them pass after taking a few melons from each cart.

Panchayat and leadership pattern. While still on judicial theories, perhaps a little digression may be allowed in order to know something about oaths taken by the villagers. Swearing is very common in the village, particularly among the younger generation. Oaths are taken in the name of a deity or a *devasthan*, or in the name of the persons' son, etc. An oath is known as *kirya* or *qasam*. The following oaths are commonly heard in the village.

Ganga Qasam or Kirya : swearing by Ganga river. This is very commonly used.
Bhagwan Qasam : swearing by God.
Mahadeo Qasam : swearing by Mahadeo.
Mahabir Qasam : swearing by Hanuman.
Gau Qasam : swearing by the cow.
Vidya Qasam : swearing by education, generally taken by schoolboys.
Ankh Qasam : swearing by one's eye.
Jawani Qasam : swearing by one's youth.
Larke Qasam : swearing by one's son.
Maa or Baap Qasam : swearing by one's mother or father.

At panchayat meetings the man giving evidence has to take an oath in the name of Gangaji before making his statement. The belief is that if after taking the oath he does not speak the truth, he would be punished by God. Sometimes the person is asked to take the water of Ganga in his hand and then give his evidence. In this process a *lota* of Ganga water is kept on the palm of the person concerned, and he is asked to speak the truth since he has holy water in his hand. Sometimes, a man is asked to keep his hand on a *devasthan* and utter the truth. At other times, when an important issue comes up, the people go to Hanuman's temple at Aliganj, and there those concerned ring the bell just to prove their stand.

7. Village Economy

MOHANA IS mainly an agricultural village. Of course in a place where caste distinctions are rigidly marked, there would be the traditional caste professions, and so in Mohana a Nai is a barber, but he is also an agriculturist; a Dhobi washes clothes, but he is also an agriculturist. So it happens that a very large percentage are farmers working either on their lands or on the lands of others for payment. The Gadaria have completely given up their caste profession of animal husbandry. The Bhaksor alone—and there are only two Bhaksor families in the village—have stuck to their traditional occupation.

Soil types. There are four types of soil in the village. Of these, three are utilised for cultivation. The best type of soil is found in the north-western part of the village, near *Bari Tal*, facing the back of the *Shivala* (temple of Shiva). This locality is called Ganghar. The soil here is very good for crops, particularly for paddy and the *rabi* crops of wheat, gram and barley. The land in this area is a composite of sand and yellow soil. To the north of Ganghar lies an area of about 70 *pakka bighas* known as Jwaren. A river flows between Ganghar and Jwaren, and forms the boundary between the two. In Jwaren is found a composition of black soil and sand. There is more of black soil than of sand, and hence ploughing is difficult. Here also the *kharif* crop of paddy and the *rabi* crops of wheat, barley and gram are grown. The yield of Jwaren is the same as the yield of Ganghar, but then Jwaren needs twice the labour. The same type of soil is found in the southern part of the village also. The third type of soil is found in the eastern side or Purab Har. This also is a mixture of sand and yellow soil, but it is very hard and ploughing is very difficult. Further the fields here need more water than the fields of Ganghar or Jwaren, but the same crops are grown. Melon fields are also found in Purab Har. The fourth type of soil is called Usar or barren type of land and is wholly unfit for cultivation.

Manure supply. With regard to manure the villagers generally use a mixture of the dung of all the farm animals except pig. The dung is collected in a pit into which is thrown the dirt swept out of houses. Sometimes small children are asked to defecate in that pit. A short, thick fence round the pit prevents any water flowing into it. After a time the decomposed contents of the pit are taken out and used as manure. This manure is called *ghoora-ki-khad*, because the pit in which the rubbish lies is called *ghoora*, and *khad* means manure. A greater part of this manure is composed of cowdung (made into particular shapes and dried) and used as fuel. To a certain extent decomposed hay is also used as manure. For this purpose the hay that is left over after the animals have had their fill is used.

Another type of manure used by the villagers is called *challance*. It is purchased in the city at the rate of five or six seers per rupee. The villagers do not know the composition of the manure. A field of one *pakka bigha* requires 20 – 30 seers of *challance*. The manure is spread over the fields and then the fields are ploughed. In using *challance* manure, the fields need to be manured for every crop. The villagers are forced to buy this because they cannot prepare a sufficient quantity of the other manure. Both types of manure cannot be used at the same time. In manuring their fields, the villagers are very careful about the quantity of manure used, for too little would mean a poor yield, and too much would result in the crop being scorched by the heat of the manure. When a field has to be manured, the manure is carried to the field either by the people themselves or in a bullock cart. Sometimes labourers are engaged for this.

Irrigation. The means of irrigation in the village are wells, tanks and canals. Irrigation through wells is known as the *pur* system, for in this method a *pur* (a leather bag) is used. Bullocks are used to draw water from the well. Right over the centre of the well is a pulley fixed to a rod, the two ends of which are fixed to two poles driven into the ground near the well. Over this pulley is passed a rope, to one end of which is fixed the leather bag, and the other end of which is attached to the harness of the bullocks. When the bullocks are near the well the bag goes down into the well and is filled with water. A man drives the bullocks down a

slope built near the well. As the bullocks go away from the well, the leather bag comes up and a man standing near the well empties the bag into a small drain which leads to the fields. Then the man guiding the bullocks drives them up the slope and the process is continued till sufficient water has been drawn. The leather bag costs about Rs. 7 and the rope about Rs. 6.

Irrigation through tanks is known as the *beri* system. The *beri* is a long, hollow, canoe-shaped structure made of bamboo sticks. Ropes are tied to the ends of the *beri*, and held by men standing at the edge of the tank. They dip the *beri* into the water, bring it up and empty it into the fields or into drains leading to the fields. The process is repeated. It is done quickly and with rhythm. At each operation about 30 seers of water are brought up. If the fields are far away from the tank, then the water is collected in a pool near the tank. A drain connects this pool with another pool, and another drain connects that pool with a third, and so on. The greater the distance between the fields and the tanks, the more the pools needed. Water is passed on from pool to pool, and finally to the fields by means of the *beri* method. This method of irrigation brings about cooperation among the villagers for no man can water his fields without the help of others, particularly if his fields are far away from the tank.

Canal irrigation is very simple. The water is taken from the canals to the fields by means of drains, but if the fields are on a higher level than the canals the *beri* system is resorted to. Canal irrigation is not very popular with the villagers, for the tax is high. Moreover the canals are not perennial, so even those who pay the tax have sometimes to fall back upon wells and tanks. Further, the villagers believe that the dirty water from the canals causes plant diseases.

Agricultural tools and equipments. The agricultural implements used in the village are the age-old ones such as the plough and the sickle. The wooden shaft on the plough which is known as *har* measures about six to eight feet in length. At one end of it are fixed three iron nails called *kharia.* At the other end is fixed a wooden portion known as the *hal.* It is fixed by making a hole in the centre of the *hal* and the *hars* are at right angles to each other. A small wooden piece, four to six inches long, known as *muchthara*,

is used to keep the *hal* in place. There are two types of *hal.* The *nagra hal* which is commonly used in the village measures three to four feet in length. The *lotna hal* is two to two-and-a-half feet long. At the upper end of the *hal* is an oval shaped wooden piece known as *mani* which serves as a handle to apply the pressure. The lower end of the *hal* is slightly curved inwards, and to it is fixed the *phar* or the iron blade. Above and below, the *phar* is supported by two pieces known as *khopra* and *gusia* respectively. Above the iron blade is another iron-piece, which protects the curved part of the *hal* from being worn out.

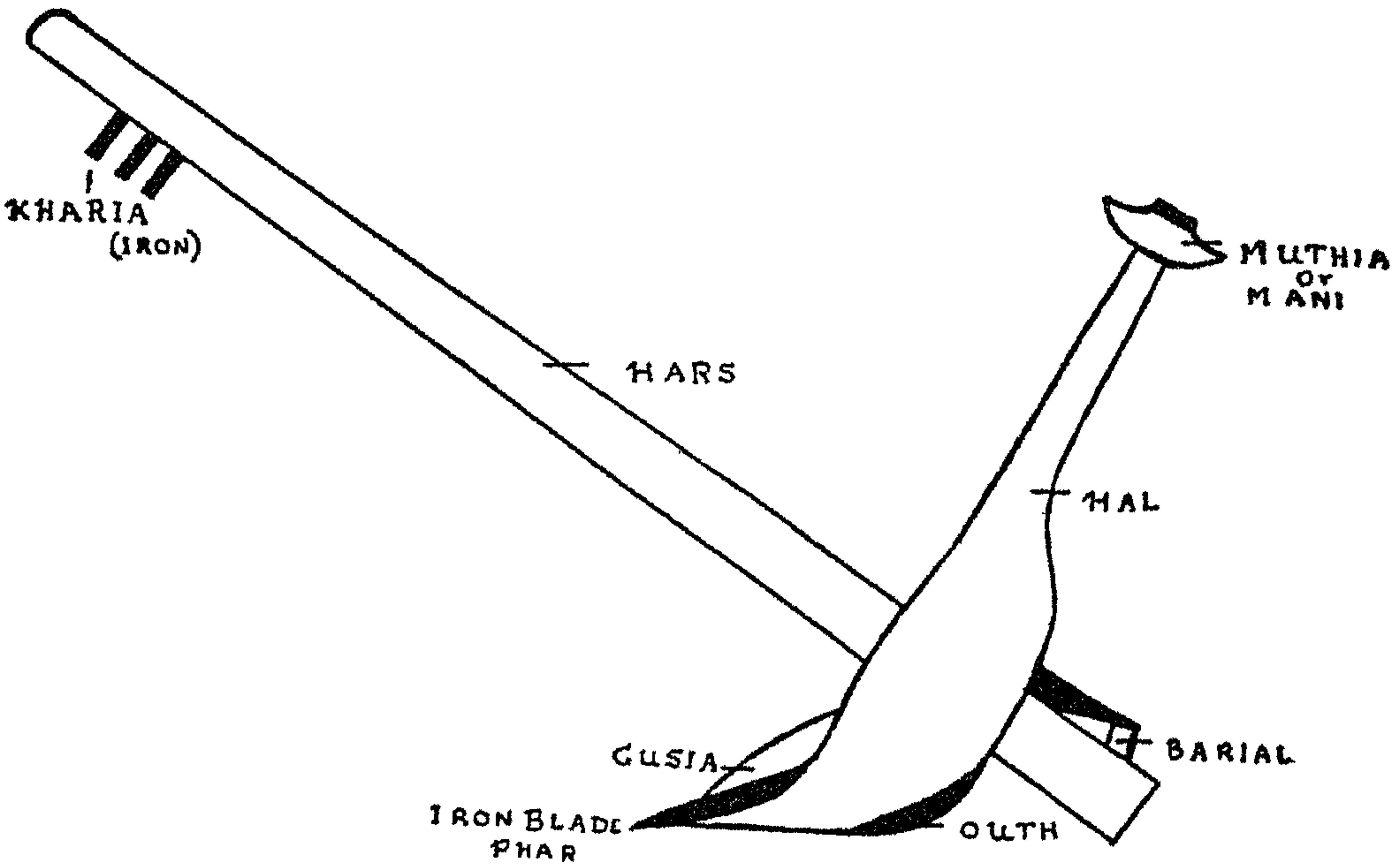
The plough is fixed to the *maachi* or the framework to which the bullocks are tied. The *kharia* at the upper end of the *hars* help to fix it on the *kauri* or the upper beam of the *maachi.* This beam has five nodes at regular intervals on its upper surface, the first and last being at the two ends. At the two extreme nodes of the beam are fixed two iron rods known as *salia.* Two wooden rods known as *gaant* are fixed on to the *kauri* close to the second and fourth nodes. The *hars* fall on the central node. The lower ends of the *salia* and the *gaant* are fixed on to a horizontal pole called the *tarvaachi.* The two *gaant* are tied to the *kauri* and the *tarvaachi* while the two *salia* pass through holes in the *kauri* and the *tarvaachi.* The spaces between the *salia* and the *gaant* provide the places for the bulls.

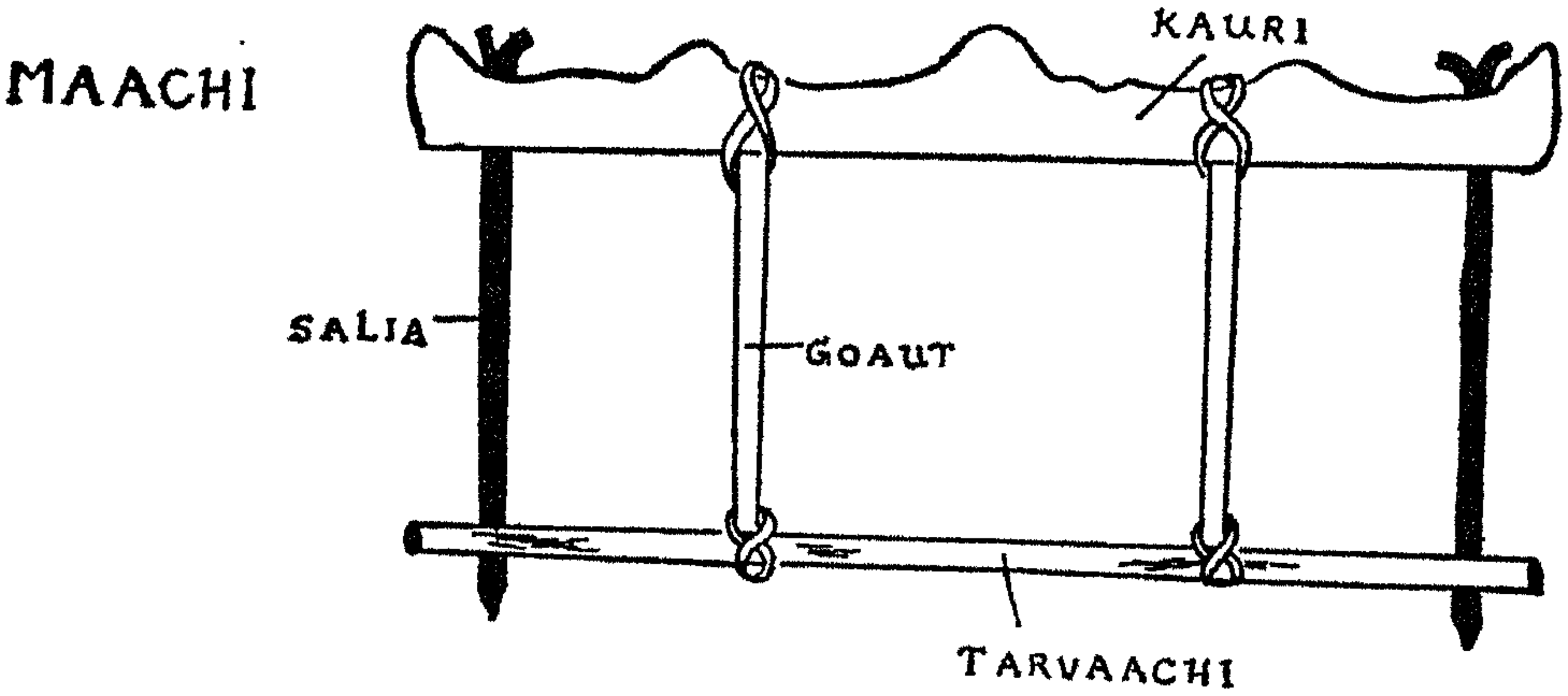
To till the fields, the plough is used, but the corners of the fields cannot be reached by the plough. Then the *kudan* comes in handy.

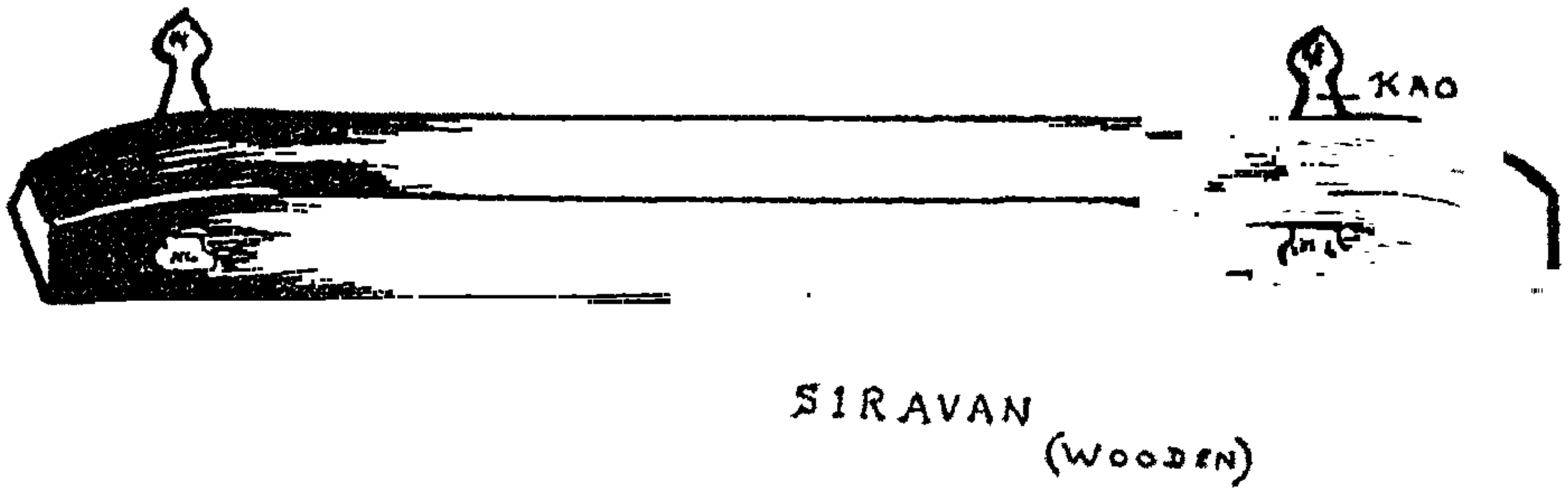
Levelling is done with the *sirawan,* which is a flat, smooth piece of wood, measuring 10-12 feet in length. At about two feet from each side, holes are made in which the *kao* are fixed. The *kao* are wooden pieces one and a half feet long. They are fixed vertically and the ropes of the bullocks are tied to them. Five or six men stand on the *sirawan* and it is drawn by a pair of bullocks.

In sowing the seed it is either scattered all over the field or is dropped into furrows made by the plough. Sometimes the seed is brought in the market, but more often the best grain of the previous year is preserved and used as seed. In some cases weeds are removed by ploughing. After ploughing, the weeds are left to dry and then removed or they are allowed to decompose and provide manure. If the dry weeds are to be removed, the *kakkar* is used.

AGRICULTURAL TOOLS AND IMPLEMENTS (I)







The *kakkar* is very similar to the *sirawan* but on the underside numerous bent and pointed iron nails are fixed. The dry weeds are raked up by the *kakkar*. When the fields are to be weeded after the seedlings have come up, then only the *khurpi* (small spade) is used. The sickle known as *hansia* is used for reaping the crop. Threshing is done either by walking the bullocks on the stalks or by beating the stalks with a thick stick. The stalks, when the ears of corn have been removed from them, are used as fodder. They are cut up into small pieces with the *gandasa*, which is a big knife in which the blade is three or four inches broad and six to eight inches long. It has a wooden handle. To remove the chaff from the grain a quantity of the mixed stuff is taken in a *soop* (winnower) and gently dropped to the ground. While falling from the *soop* the chaff is blown away by the breeze. If there is no breeze, a piece of cloth is moved to and fro to create a breeze. When the husk has to be removed from the grain, the *moosal* is used. The *moosal* is a long, round stick. The grain is put into a shallow pit in the ground, specially made for this purpose, and is lightly pounded with the *moosal*. This separates the husk from the grain. The husk is removed by winnowing.

It would not be out of place to mention other tools used in the village in out-door work. The *pharua* resembles the *kudari*, but it has a broader iron-piece and a shorter wooden handle than the *kudari*. The working edge of the *pharua* is four to six inches long. The *pharua* is used for digging purposes. The *kulhari* is used for cleaving logs of wood, while branches are cut down from trees with the *banka*.

Watching the crops. The fields have to be watched and guarded against thieves, monkeys, cattle and birds. To keep the first two away, the people merely go round the fields once or twice both in the day and in the night. In the case of fields which are close to populated areas a man sleeps in the fields to keep away the cattle. For this purpose a rough shelter comprising a thatched roof placed on four wooden pillars is erected in the fields. Fields that are far away from the village are not watched at night. Birds are very troublesome and they have to be scared away by various noises. When the crop is harvested, the grain is collected in a place called the *khalian*. The *khalian* also needs to be watched in the harvesting season to prevent thefts.

Crops grown. There are three main crops grown in the village. They are: *Kharif, Rabi* and *Jeth* crop. The *kharif* crop is sown in *Asarh* (June-July), i.e. at the beginning of the rainy season, and hence it is known as the 'rainy season crop'. This crop includes:

a. Dhan (paddy)
b. Urad (black-gram)
c. Bari juar or makka (maize)
d. Choti juar (smaller variety of maize)
e. Bajra (millet)
f. Kodon (inferior variety of rice)
g. Sawan (inferior variety of rice)
h. Moong (green gram)
i. Kakun
j. Merua

Of these crops Kodon, Moong, Kakun and Merua are grown in very small quantities. The others are grown on a large scale.

The *rabi* crop includes:

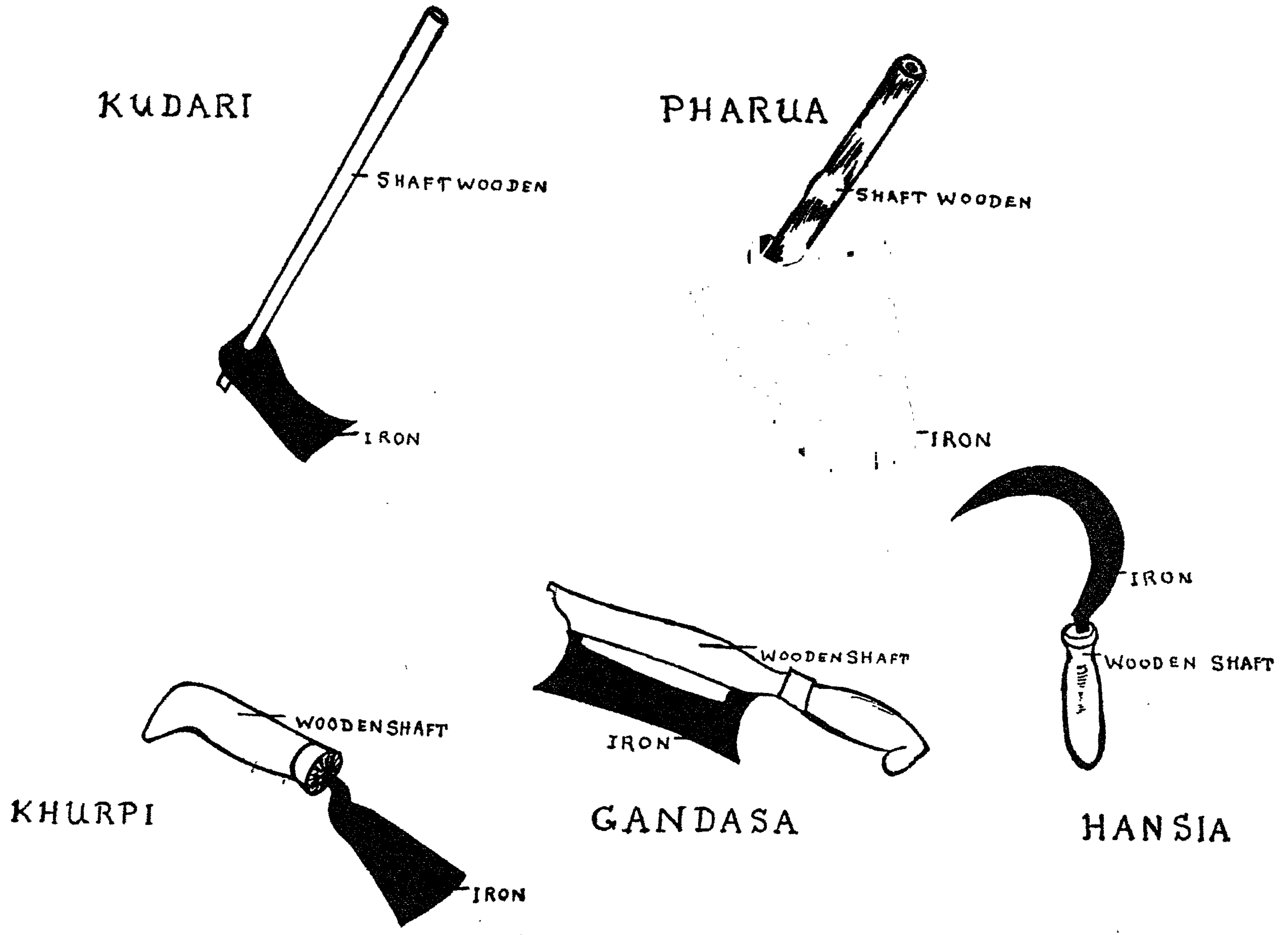
a. Gehùn (wheat)
b. Channa (gram)
c. Matar (peas)
d. Jau (barley)
e. Sarson (mustard)
f. Arhar (a variety of pulse)
g. Alsi (linseed)

This crop is harvested in *Chait* (March-April) and is therefore known as the *Chait* crop. Very little of *Alsi* is grown.

The melon crop is the only *Jeth* (May-June) crop. This is an important cash crop.

In some cases, as soon as one crop is harvested, the field is ploughed and another crop is sown. The latter is known as *juthaila.* There is no interval between the harvesting of one crop and the sowing of the other. *Rabi* crops need more regular manuring than the *kharif* crops, but the fields of *rabi* crops need not be weeded.

AGRICULTURAL TOOLS AND IMPLEMENTS (2)



KHARIF CROPS

Paddy (Dhan). Generally the low-lying fields are taken up for this crop. The fields are manured in late June just before the rains. Soon after the first rains, the fields are ploughed twice or thrice. When the fields have been ploughed well, they are ready to be sown. The seed is scattered all over the field. Generally eight seers of paddy are sown in a *kachcha bigha*. The fields are then levelled twice and left as they are for rains to provide the necessary water. If the rainfall is low the fields are irrigated weekly with water from the tanks.

Fields which are on a higher level and which need irrigation are ploughed even in *Baisakh* (April-May). After ploughing, the fields are left as they are for a few days, for the weeds to dry up. The dry weeds are removed and the fields irrigated by canals. Again ploughing is done twice or thrice and then the seed can be sown. Paddy is never sown on Saturdays for that means bad luck.

Fifteen or twenty days after sowing, the seedlings come up. At that time, the fields need to be weeded. They are again weeded when the ears appear.

The *dhan* crop ripens in *Kuar* (Sept.-Oct.). The plants turn yellow, and the grains colour a bright yellow. Members of the family themselves reap the crop. Sometimes, labourers known as *launihars* are engaged for this work. When the crop is harvested it is made into bundles and taken to the *khalian*. The *launihars* take one bundle out of every 26 bundles as their labour charge. The amount they take is called *launi*.

Threshing and winnowing are done in the *khalian*. Sometimes *launihars* are engaged for this also, and they take one maund of grain out of every 13 maunds as their *launi*.

The average yield is about eight *kachcha* maunds per *kachcha bigha*. The paddy is stored in bags or in big earthen pots. The stalks are used as fodder, and also to sleep on in winter. Any surplus grain is sold in the Kandion market, or in the village itself, but very few villagers have any surplus to sell.

An insect known as *gandhi* attacks the plant and eats up the grain. Superstition says that this insect comes only as a result of others casting the evil eye. Hence as a preventive measure

four or five green neem twigs are fixed in the field to avert the effect of the evil eye. Sometimes a handful of soil is taken from the field for applying *mantra* (incantation). About two years ago, M. Singh, a villager, brought from Andaura—a C.D.P. centre—a drug which was said to be fatal to this insect, but it was not effective and so no one else tried it.

The following varieties of *dhan* are grown in the village: *Maheen*, *Harkasua*, *Juddhi*, *Mutmuri*, *Deuhbi* and *Formi*.

Black grams. *Urad* and *Moong* are the only varieties of pulse grown in the *kharif* season. The villagers do not grow *moong* in large quantities, but *urad* is grown by almost every agricultural family, for it is very useful. The grain is broken into two and is used like other pulses. Its raw preparations like *bori* serve as curry. Especially in marriages, and on other occasions, it is indispensable and therefore it is essential to grow a large quantity of it.

In *Asarh* (June-July) begins the preparation of the fields. The fields are ploughed four or five times, if rains permit. The fields reserved for this crop and left unused throughout the year are ploughed 10-12 times. Generally the seed is sown in *Sawan* (July-August) but sometimes due to heavy and incessant rains the seed is sown in *Bhadon* (Aug.-Sept.). Two seers of *urad* are required for sowing a *kachcha bigha*. The seed is thrown in such a way as to cover the entire field. When the seed is sown, the fields are levelled. The fields are generally not manured for this crop, but if manuring is necessary, it is done in *Asarh* (June-July).

Saturday is not the day for sowing, but if for some reason *urad* has to be sown on a Saturday, then a little of *bajra* and a little of *choti juar* are mixed with the *urad* seed to mitigate ill-luck.

The fields are weeded once, either in *Kuar* (Sept.-Oct.) or in *Kartik* (Oct.-Nov.). There is generally no need for irrigation as rain water is sufficient, but if rainfall is scanty, then the fields have to be irrigated.

There is a disease known as *kalra* which affects the *urad* crop. When affected by this disease, the plant grows abnormally well, but it does not flower or bear pods. The villagers know no remedy for this disease.

In *Kartik* (Oct.-Nov.) the crop is ready for harvest. The plants wither, and the pods dry up and become black in colour. The

average yield of *urad* is about five or six *kachcha* maunds per *kachcha bigha*. Sometimes *urad* is sown with black *arhar*.

Maize. The fields are manured in *Asarh* (June-July) before the rains. Soon after the rains, ploughing begins, and then the seed is sown. *Bari* and *choti juar* are sown separately. About two and a half seers of *bari juar* can be sown in a *kachcha bigha*, but only one seer of *choti juar* can be sown in a *kachcha bigha*. After sowing, the fields are levelled.

The *bari juar* fields need to be weeded in *Sawan*. Where weeds have grown thickly they are removed by ploughing. Care is taken to see that the maize plants are not uprooted. The *choti juar* fields are not weeded. If rainfall is scanty then irrigation has to be resorted to.

No disease affects this crop, but excess of rain may destroy it. Then there are the birds which have to be scared away. The fields are watched with great vigilance when the ears of corn come up, for they are liable to be stolen.

Bari juar ripens in *Kuar* (Sept.-Oct.). *Choti juar* takes a longer period to ripen and is ready for harvest only in late *Kartik* (Oct.-Nov.) or early *Aghan* (Nov.-Dec.). *Arhar* is also sown together with *choti juar* but it is reaped only in *Chait* for it is a *rabi* crop. *Choti juar* is affected by a disease known as *khoosil*.

Millet. If necessary the fields are manured before the rains, and the whole of *Asarh* is devoted to ploughing, for the fields have to be ploughed four to six times. The seed is sown in *Sawan* (July-Aug.). About half a seer of *bajra* is needed to sow a *kachcha bigha*. It is believed that on the day of sowing *bajra*, fire should not be given to anyone outside the family. Nonconformity with this traditional rule would result in the crop being affected by *khoosil*, so the villagers say. When attacked by this disease, the ears swell and the grains become black; when taken out there is no grain, but only black powder. Probably it is the fungus which attacks the crops. The villagers are helpless against it.

The crop is ready for harvest in *Kartik*. When the crop ripens, the grain is black. The average yield is about six *kachcha* maunds per *kachcha bigha*.

Sawan (inferior variety of rice). The cultivation of this crop does not involve much labour. Further it ripens in a very short period,

say, within six weeks. So every agricultural family in the village grows at least one or two *bighas* of this crop. The fields are ploughed once or twice in *Asarh* (June-July) after the rains. There is no need for manure. When ploughing is over, the seed is scattered and the fields are levelled. After a fortnight, when the seedlings come up, the fields are seeded. The crop ripens in *Bhadon* (Aug.-Sept.) when the plants dry and the grain takes on a dull tan.

RABI CROPS

Wheat. Wheat, barley and mustard are often grown together, for their combined growth increases the yield. Sometimes wheat is grown separately also.

The wheat-fields are manured in *Asarh* (June-July). Ploughing also begins in the same month. Usually four or five days are allowed in between the ploughings. The ploughing continues till *Kuar* (Sept.-Oct.). Then the fields are levelled and the seed is sown in *Kartik*. The sowing begins after *Karwa Chouth* (4th-15th of *Kartik*) and is finished before *Dewali*. Wheat is not sown on Tuesdays, for an accepted belief is that if wheat were sown on a Tuesday, field-mice would attack and destroy the crop. If anyone wishes to sow it on a Tuesday, he first offers about half a seer of wheat to the field-mice. Sometimes, the seed is just scattered all over the field but often it is dropped into furrows made by the ploughs. Before the seed is sown, the fields are levelled.

Five days later an entire field is divided into several beds, by raising small earthen boundaries the height of which is usually six inches. When irrigated, the moisture is retained in the beds. The fields are irrigated for the first time in *Aghan* when the plants are nearly a foot high. They are again irrigated in *Poos* (Dec.-Jan.) if there is no rainfall.

It is not considered necessary to guard the wheat fields all the twenty-four hours. Going round the fields once or twice during the day is supposed to be enough. The leaves of the wheat plants being sharp-edged, the cattle do not graze them. The grain ripens in *Phalgun* (Feb.-March) and *Chait* (March-April) is the month of harvest. Harvesting is done both night and day. The average

yield of wheat per *kachcha bigha* is between seven and nine *kachcha* maunds.

Sometimes the wheat crop is attacked by a disease known as *Garibi*, which spoils the corn. Sometimes the disease is infectious and spreads to the adjacent fields also. *Poos* (Dec.-Jan.) is the month when the disease is widely prevalent. The villagers are unaware of any remedy for this. However the strong west winds tend to lesson its virulence, and at times wipe it off completely.

Barley. Since this is grown with wheat, all the care and toil bestowed on the wheat crop is bestowed on this also. Sometimes it is grown with gram.

Mustard. As a rule it is grown along with wheat. Wheat is often sown along furrows, but the mustard seed is merely scattered here and there. The plants flower in *Poos* and the crop is ripe for harvest in *Phalgun*, i.e. two months before the wheat harvest.

A worm called *mahu* eats the mustard flowers. Unfortunately, the villagers can do nothing about it. These worms flourish when the east wind blows, but the west wind is detrimental to them.

The villagers grow very little of mustard. A *kachcha* maund of wheat is sufficient for sowing a *kachcha bigha*. Similar is the case with barley also, but only half a seer of mustard is sown in one *bigha*, along with wheat. One seer of oil can be extracted from two and a half seers of mustard. The villagers prepare oil sufficient only for their use, and not for sale. The mustard from which oil has been extracted is good cattle fodder, for it increases the quantity of their milk.

Gram. Soon after the paddy harvest, the fields are ploughed for the sowing of gram. Thus the remnants of the paddy plants together with the weeds decompose in the fields and become manure. No other manure is needed for the gram crop. The seed is sown in *Kuar* (Sept.-Oct.) immediately after the first ploughing. About eight seers of gram are required to sow one *kachcha bigha*. The seed is just scattered over the fields. The fields are then levelled, and after an interval of four or five days, they are again ploughed and levelled.

The gram ripens in *Phalgun* and is harvested in *Chait*. In *Magh* when the east winds blow, *bahadura*, a kind of insect, attacks the plants and destroys the entire yield. There is no remedy for this,

except the strong west winds which kill the insect.

Peas. Cultivating peas is very lucrative to the villager. It is sown in the second fortnight of *Kuar.* Among the *rabi* crops, this is the first to be sown. It is generally sown in the paddy fields. Sometimes it is sown by itself, and sometimes with gram. Melons grown in the pea fields are of a good quality, therefore those desirous of growing melons sow with peas alone and not with gram.

After the harvesting of paddy, the fields are ploughed four or five times and levelled. Ploughing is done from the afternoon till evening, and levelling is done the same night, continuing till morning. Both ploughing and levelling go on for four or five days. Then the seed is sown. Like wheat and barley, the pea-seeds are dropped in the furrows made by the blade of the plough. About a *kachcha* maund of pea-seeds is enough for a *kachcha bigha.*

It is believed that the compost manure provided for the paddy plants in *Asarh* (June-July) nourishes the pea-plants also. The quality of the peas depends upon the manure used for the paddy crop. No other manure is used for the peas. The pea-fields are irrigated in *Aghan* (Nov.-Dec.) and *Poos* (Dec.-Jan.) by which time the plants begin to bear fruit.

The fields require watching throughout the day to keep away the birds. The owners go to the fields once or twice in the night also to prevent thefts. The pea-fields are harvested thrice in one season. The total produce on an average is 15-16 maunds per *bigha.* In *Magh* and *Phalgun* the peas are taken to the markets in Lucknow. No disease affects the pea-plants, but the bitter cold of *Poos* is harmful. If the fields are well irrigated, the effect is mild.

Arhar (a variety of pulse). Of the two varieties of *arhar,* black and red, the former is always sown with *urad,* soon after the harvest of *savan* in *Bhadon* (Aug.-Sept.). After the harvest, the fields are ploughed twice and levelled and the seed is sown. Once again the fields are ploughed and levelled. A seer and a half of black gram and three-quarter seer of black *arhar* are sown in a *bigha.* Red *arhar* is considered to be a better variety than black *arhar.* It is sown in *Asarh* in the wheat fields. Wheat is reaped in *Chait* (March-April) and the fields are not utilised for any other crop in the intermediary period. Hence red *arhar* is not a *juthaila* crop as black

arhar is. Immediately after the rains, the fields are ploughed three or four times and levelled. A seer of red *arhar* and half a seer of *choti juar* are sown in a *bigha*. Both types of *arhar* are sown by scattering the seed. Though black *arhar* is sown about a month and a half later than red *arhar*, both ripen in *Phalgun* and are harvested in *Chait*. The average yield of red *arhar* and *choti juar* per *kachcha bigha* is between six and eight maunds of *arhar* and four or five maunds of *choti juar*.

Agricultural rituals. So much for the techniques of agriculture. Now it would be worth while to know something of the rituals and festivals connected with the sowing and harvesting of these crops, before giving an account of other crops. Tillers of the soil have to work hard to earn their daily bread and a visitor to the village notices that the villagers work laboriously and incessantly. Not for them any recreation clubs or cinema shows, but only work throughout the year, with festivals and ceremonies lifting them for a while above 'the daily round of common task'.

Harchatt. It is the ritual of worshipping the plough—especially the blade of the plough—and is observed six days after *Raksha Bandhan* and two days before *Janmashtmi*. A paste of powdered rice and turmeric is applied on the hands, and impressions of the palm and fingers are made on the plough. Flowers are thrown on the blade. Fields are not ploughed on this day. Women with male issues observe fast and worship Mahadev. They offer water to Mahadev in the evening, and only then take food. *Pakka* food consisting of *puris* and *halwa* is cooked for the occasion. The low caste people also observe this ritual, with the difference that their womenfolk do not fast.

Aghani. On the full moon day of *Aghan* (Nov.-Dec.) is observed the ritual of sowing called *Aghani* after the month in which it is observed. No deity is worshipped, but a feast of *kachcha* food, including black gram, rice, *roti*, and gram preparations, is arranged to entertain the *harvaah* (permanent servants) and close relatives. This takes place after the sowing of the *rabi* crops and is therefore celebrated by every agricultural family. Formerly the ceremony of *Boi* (literally meaning sowing) was performed after the sowing of every *rabi* crop, and a *kachcha* feast was arranged for the *harvaah* and close relatives. Thus a man had to perform several *Boi* cere-

monies according to the number of *rabi* crops he cultivated. Now the celebration of the *Boi* ceremonies has been stopped and instead the *Aghani* festival, which is considered to cover all the *Boi* ceremonies, is celebrated. "In this way," said a villager, "a man saves food and labour." At present the *Boi* ceremony is observed only after the sowing of sugar-cane, but since very few villagers grow it, the ceremony is observed very rarely.

There are no such ceremonies connected with the sowing of *kharif* crops, but *Asaarhi* festival, in addition to its primary importance, is considered to correspond to the *Aghani* festival.

Nava festival. *Nava* means the ears of grain, and the *Nava* festival is the harvest festival, celebrated twice a year, once in the month of *Magh*, and the next time in the month of *Bhadon*. There is no definite date for this festival and it is celebrated on auspicious days fixed by the Pandit after consulting the movement of the planets from the almanac. In different villages it is celebrated on different days. In the *Nava* of *Magh*, the ears of wheat, and in the *Nava* of *Bhadon* the ears of *savan* are worshipped.

Generally *dalilla* (a particular variety of peas), wheat and barley are not consumed before the *Nava* of *Magh*, and *savan* and maize are not taken before the *Nava* of *Bhadon*. Though peas are also among the new crops, people do not now mind taking them before the *Nava* festival.

The *Nava* festival is celebrated by all castes. It is of great importance, for on this occasion people of different castes meet in one another's houses. Such meetings take place only during *Holi* and *Nava* festivals.

Preparations for celebrating the *Nava* begin early in the morning, when the houses are cleaned, and at least the courtyards, where *pooja* is performed, are plastered with cowdung paste. In the morning only *kachcha* food is prepared. This food is similar among all castes. Curds and *bare* (a preparation of black gram) are the special features of the day's meals. The people take food only after a bath. In the evening *pakka* food is prepared in most houses, but the poor people have only *kachcha* food even then.

The day is observed as a holiday, and no work except something that is very urgent is done in the fields. After sunset, preparations for *pooja* begin and a wooden plank is kept in the courtyard

where *pooja* is to be performed. One member from each family goes to bring the *Nava*. The person authorised to do this has to fulfil certain conditions. While plucking the *Nava* he should keep his face turned towards the north and he should return in silence. These instructions are given by the Pandit only to the Thakur, while the people of other castes do so according to their own will. An interesting feature of this festival is that the high caste people always bring the *Nava* from the fields of the low caste people, and vice versa. The villagers know no valid reason for this, but it is an established custom. Once it so happened that all the Thakur plucked the *Nava* from the field of a Chamar, and the crop was half destroyed, but the Chamar did not mind it because the *Nava* was used for worship.

The worship of *Nava* is first performed in the house of the Pandit, and when the conch is sounded, the others perform the worship in their houses. An ornament of silver and some curds are placed on the wooden plank kept in the courtyard (white objects are considered auspicious, and hence the silver ornament and the curds). Then the *Nava* brought by the member of the family is also placed on the wooden plank. The grain is taken out and mixed with jaggery. The eldest woman of the family distributes the grain which is first offered to Shivji and other deities. The grain is served with the night meal to every member of the family. Infants are also given a little of it to eat. After their night meal the people go to visit their friends and relatives in the village.

JETH CROP

Melons. The melon crop, if successful, is one which brings great profit to the villagers. The agriculturist might make a profit of Rs. 400-600 from a *bigha* of melon field. The melon crop was first introduced into the village about 20 years ago, and at that time a maund of melons was sold for a rupee or even 75 nP. But now since the market has widened and melons are popular, they are sold at the rate of Rs. 8 per maund.

The seeds are sown in *Magh* and for this the ploughing begins even in *Kuar*. The fields have to be ploughed 10 or 12 times. Some agriculturists leave the fields fallow for a few months before

sowing melon seeds. Others raise a crop of black gram in those fields. The melon seeds are washed well and dried in the sun. When the sowing season is at hand, the seeds are left in water for three to five days. They are then placed in cowdung manure for 10 or 15 days, during which the seeds swell up and sprout, and then they are sown in the fields. A man makes furrows with the plough, and behind him goes the sower dropping the seeds into the furrows. The fields are then levelled.

A week later, beds are made in the fields, by raising mud bunds about six inches high. After one month the soil is turned over with a hoe. The fields are watered in *Phalgun*, four or five days before or after the festival of *Holi*. Again the soil is turned over and levelled. Then the fields are watered seven or eight times, sometimes even 10 times, at different intervals, either with well-water or canal water. The *beri* method of irrigation is not resorted to because in the dry months of summer there is not enough water in the village tanks to water the fields. The villagers strongly believe that the melon crop will be ruined if the fields are irrigated by canal water, because they feel water from the canals is dirty and causes plant diseases. So, as far as possible, they stick to well-irrigation, for they say water from the wells is always clean and harmless. But wells, being scanty and shallow, go dry if heavily taxed upon, so that not all the melon fields can get water from the wells. The only other alternative is canal irrigation and rather than see the plants dry up for lack of water, they reluctantly turn to the canals.

The first leaf appears in 20-30 days. The leaf comes out easily if the seed had sprouted and not merely swelled up before sowing. The tender fruits appear in *Jeth* (May-June) and the fields have to be guarded against cattle.

When the melons are ripe, they are picked and taken in bullock-carts to the markets in Lucknow. Carts are not easily available as there are only a few in the village. Melons from Amarpur and Rampur are also taken to Lucknow and sometimes as many as 150 melon-carts proceed at a time to the city. The low-caste people generally own small tracts of land and so they carry their melon fruits to Lucknow in baskets carried on their heads. About 25–30 seers of melons can be carried thus in one trip. Sometimes

the melons are auctioned through agents in Lucknow who charge a small commission for every load of fruit sold. The profits from the melon crop fluctuate widely. In one year a man might get a profit of Rs. 1,000 but in the next year the same man might not get even Rs. 100 for profit.

The melon plants are attacked by various diseases and the villagers have no knowledge of insecticides to check these diseases and they have no faith in the utility of such preventive measures. When the crops fail, they always attribute it to God's anger or the Divine Will. On the profits of the melon crop the villagers pin their hopes of paying off their debts, settling the marriages of their daughters, buying agricultural implements, and so on. So when the deadly insects or diseases lay their grip on the melon plants, it means unhappiness, but the villagers say with calm resignation, 'Let God's will be done.' The diseases to which the crop are subject are called *Jagrara, Kharra* or *Murra* and *Gulla*. *Jagrara* is actually an insect which attacks the roots, making the plants dry up. *Kharra* or *Murra* is a disease of the leaves. *Gulla* is a disease as a result of which the fruits are covered with black spots.

Melon seeds also bring income. After eating the fruits, the people collect the good seeds in an earthern jar filled with water. A few days later the seeds are washed, dried in the sun and stored carefully. In the sowing season they are sometimes sold at the rate of Rs. 18 to Rs. 20 a seer.

ARBORICULTURE

Mango trees. There are about 13 mango groves in the village. The oldest is Kooti Bagh consisting of about 80 trees. This grove is said to be more than 80 years of age. At present it belongs to two ex-zamindars of the village, but previously it belonged to others. It is believed that all the mango trees of the Kooti Bagh were planted by some *sadhus*. The youngest mango grove is Kalam Bagh. The trees of this grove number about 90. In all there are 285 mango trees in Mohana, and they are owned by different people. However, the major shareholders are the two ex-zamindars, already mentioned. Together they own 195 trees. No one else owns more than 15 trees.

Most of the mango trees were planted by the low caste people, especially the Chamar, but now only two or three trees are owned by them. This is because before the zamindari abolition, the entire land belonged to the Thakur, and when any trees were planted, they were claimed by the owners of the land in which they were planted. The result is that the low caste people abstained from growing any fruit trees. Even after the zamindari abolition they do not grow mango trees because they are afraid that under the Government land consolidation scheme, their land might be joined to someone else's and they would lose their claim over the trees. Moreover, mango trees take five or six years to yield fruits, and therefore growing other crops is preferred to waiting so long for the mango crop, which in the end may not prove profitable.

There are three varieties of mangoes grown here, namely, *kalami*, *desi*, and *tukhmi*. Of the thirteen mango groves in the village, only one has *kalami* trees and that is Kalam Bagh. All the trees of this grove are of the *kalami* variety. The planting of the *desi* and the *tukhmi* varieties is very easy. The seed is planted in a pit 12 inches deep. Under favourable conditions it would grow of itself. The planting of the *kalami* variety is a bit difficult. As in planting the other two types, the seed is first planted in a pit 12 inches deep. When the plant grows to a height of one foot it is grafted with a sapling of a *kalami* tree and transplanted. A few months later, it is transplanted again, this time in a pit three feet deep. The tree yields fruit in two or three years' time. The other two varieties bear fruit after five or six years, but the life of a *kalami* tree is shorter than the life of a *desi* or a *tukhmi* tree. The average span of life of the latter two is about 100 years, while a *kalami* tree bears fruit only for 50-75 years.

All mango trees blossom in *Magh* (Jan.-Feb.). When a mango tree blooms for the first time, the blossoms are not allowed to develop into fruits, as it is believed the life of the tree would be shortened. The fruits appear in *Chait* and ripen in *Asarh*. The *kalami* fruits ripen a little earlier. *Kalami* is a better variety than *desi* or *tukhmi*, and fetches a better price in the market. Nevertheless, the villagers prefer *desi* to *kalami* for, according to them, it has a higher nutritive value.

Those who cannot take care of their trees auction the annual yield. The auctioning takes place when the trees are in full bloom. The people who purchase the anticipated yield judge the value of the trees by the quality and quantity of the blossoms. The trees are auctioned publicly and the person who makes the highest bid gets the right of the yield for that season. After the auction the responsibility of looking after the grove, plucking the fruits, taking them to markets, etc., lies with the purchaser. If, due to some mishap, the yield does not come up to his expectations, the purchaser has to bear the loss. So the experienced purchasers are cautious in bidding for the crop. Often it so happens that two or three or more people jointly purchase the yield and divide equally among themselves all expense and income from the grove. Sometimes one man purchases the yield and then gets help from others to look after the grove. This happens only when the purchaser is unable to look after the trees or if he does not find reliable labour to work for him. Hence taking into consideration the problem of labour, the profits are shared equally. When a grove is auctioned the highest bidder has to pay a part of the total bid then and there. The rest of the money is paid after the produce has been sold. The purchaser always pays first the amount he owes the owner and then shares the profits with his partners.

Both ripe and unripe mangoes are sold in the market. The unripe mangoes are those which fall off the trees due to strong winds, otherwise the villagers allow the mangoes to ripen on the trees, that is, in the case of *desi* and *tukhmi* mangoes. *Kalami* mangoes are rarely allowed to ripen on the trees. The fruits are plucked when they are mature, and buried in grain or straw. Due to the intense heat of the straw or grain, they ripen quicker than if allowed to ripen on the trees. The villagers always sell the mangoes and not their products. Only when the yield is more than enough, the mangoes are dried in the sun and *khatai* (a sour spice) is prepared and sold. Mango pickle or jam is not prepared for the market, but a little is prepared for local consumption. The fruits, when ready for sale, are carried to Lucknow either in bullock carts or by the people. The usual bullock cart hire is 50 nP per maund. Sometimes a few people collectively assign the responsibility of selling the mangoes in Lucknow to one person if he is

reliable. However, the people generally prefer to sell their mangoes themselves.

Guarding and protecting mango trees is quite a problem, for birds, squirrels, monkeys and other animals, all claim a right over the fruits. When the fruits grow big, watchmen are employed; their duties, besides guarding the trees, include gathering the fallen fruits, and sometimes taking the mangoes to the market. Apart from the birds and animals, there are certain enemies of the mango trees which often completely spoil the produce. The hot summer winds are harmful to the crop and so are the strong winds. There is yet another type of wind, which the villagers are unable to identify. It is not possible to distinguish it from the hot wind but it is most deadly to mangoes. Another type of wind inimical to mangoes is called *kharra*. This dries up the stem and tender shoots. There is no effective protection against these winds and the villagers find themselves helpless in their fight against nature.

Felling of mango trees is not practised, for fruit trees are tended with the loving care which one would bestow upon one's children. It is only the old and decrepit trees that are cut down.

Toddy trees. There are two types of toddy trees. One is of a larger and taller variety than the other and produces fruits every year. Toddy is tapped from these fruits. Each tree produces about 50 pitchers of toddy a year (a pitcher contains about seven seers). The trees bear fruits in *Chait* (March-April) and *Baisakh* (April-May). A tree of the second variety is about 12-15 feet in height, and does not produce any fruits, but toddy flows out when a hole is bored in the trunk of the trees. These trees give toddy every alternate year for about four months. This is an inferior kind of toddy and is generally sold at the rate of 25 or 30 nP a bottle, whereas the toddy taken from the fruits is sold at 35 or 45 nP a bottle.

In the toddy tapping season, the owners sell the trees (or rather the anticipated yield of the trees) to dealers from Lucknow. The rates differ according to the variety, and from season to season. The usual price is Rs. 3.50 or Rs. 2.75 a tree. The owners decide the price. Usually the one owning the largest number of trees is given the right to fix the price. If, however, someone does not want to join the deal, he can have his own terms with the purchaser. After the sale, the purchaser sends his men to collect the toddy.

Experts who supervise the extracting of toddy stay in the village.

In the second variety the bark of the tree is scraped and is allowed to dry for two or three days. A hole is then bored in the scraped part and a watery substance trickles out. This is allowed to trickle down and is not collected for it is not toddy. After 24 hours, toddy oozes out, and a pitcher is tied on to the tree with two toddy leaves placed in such a way that they act as a tube or a drain through which the toddy flows from the hole to the pitcher. In about 24 hours the pitcher gets full. The first pitcher of toddy is offered to the gods. When toddy is collected, it is sent to the toddy-shop to be refined. For the first eight or ten days the trees give one pitcherful daily. Afterwards the quantity decreases. Work on the tree is then stopped for four or five days, and when after the interval work is resumed on it, the pitcher is fixed to a fresh hole bored in the tree. Toddy collectors have to keep watch over the trees at nights also. Otherwise the toddy may be stolen. The villagers say that fresh toddy is not intoxicating, but only invigorating. It is only the old, fermented toddy which makes a man tipsy.

There are about 250 toddy trees in the village, belonging to different people. The villagers do not need to grow or plant toddy trees, for the trees grow by themselves and the villagers claim the trees which grow on their land. They further claim the trees which grow on the land which was once owned by them. Thus all the toddy trees of the village are owned by ex-zamindars or by Thakurs. Trees which grow on Government land are also claimed by the ex-zamindars. In connection with this, the *lekhpal* went to the village in 1955, when the toddy season was at its height. He told the *sarpanch* that when the money was obtained from the contractors the sum realised for trees on Government land should be deposited with the Government treasury. The *sarpanch* and other prominent villagers argued with the *lekhpal* that so far all the money had been realised by the villagers and that there was no reason why part of the money should now go to the Government. The *lekhpal* replied that whatever had happened was a mistake on the part of the panchayat, and that it should not be repeated. He further said that with the exception of trees in groves and fields belonging to the villagers, all the trees belonged to the Government. Much time

was wasted in pointless arguments. Finally the *lekhpal* left the village saying that he would return a few days later with a map in which Government and private lands were marked. The village leaders were of the opinion that they could bribe the *lekhpal* and enjoy the profits of the trees growing on Government land also. The *lekhpal* went to the village again, armed with a register and a map of the village to answer any arguments which the villagers might bring up. Contrary to their expectations the villagers found that the *lekhpal* could not be bribed. Those who claimed ownership of Government trees were sorry about this action of the *lekhpal*, whose orders had to be obeyed. A large number of toddy trees were found to belong to the Government.

Where arboriculture is concerned, great interest is shown only in the mango and the toddy trees. Lemon, tamarind, *neem* and papaya trees are planted here and there, but not for the sake of making money.

Vegetable production. The villagers grow several vegetables such as pumpkins, gourds, brinjals, beans, cucumbers, tomatoes, onion, garlic etc., but only potatoes are grown on a large scale.

The annual cycle of agricultural and domestic activities is as follows:

Months	*Activities*
Magh (January-February)	Sowing of melon crop. Planting sugarcane. Watching pea-fields. Harvesting peas and taking them to markets in Lucknow. Building houses.
Phalgun (February-March)	Harvesting peas and taking them to market. Irrigating melon fields. Harvesting mustard and barley. Planting potatoes (if grown). Repairing and building houses.
Chait (March-April)	Harvesting wheat, gram and red and black *arhar*. Watching *Khalians*. Threshing and winnowing. Sowing sugarcane (if late).
Baisakh (April-May)	Irrigating melon fields every fourth, fifth or eighth day. Watching these fields. Plucking melons and taking them to markets in Lucknow. Ploughing *dhan* fields which are on a high level. Digging *kachcha* wells in the fields for irrigational purposes.

Jeth (May-June)	Watching melon fields. Plucking melons and taking them to markets. Manuring fields for the *dhan* crop. Repairing houses.
Asarh (June-July)	Preparing fields for *savan, kodan, dhan, bajra, urad, bari juar,* and *choti juar.* Sowing *savan, kodan,* and *dhan, bari juar, choti juar* and red *arhar.* Manuring and ploughing wheat fields. Watching mango groves. Plucking mangoes and taking them to markets.
Sawan (July-August)	Weeding *savan, kodon, dhan, bari juar, choti juar,* and red *arhar.* Sowing these crops if delayed due to rains. Sowing *urad* and *bajra.* Ploughing wheat fields.
Bhadon (August-September)	Harvesting and threshing *savan* and *kodon.* Ploughing wheat fields. Sowing black *arhar,* and *urad* (if delayed by rains).
Kuar (September-October)	Harvesting *dhan, bari juar,* and *choti juar.* Watching *Khalians.* Threshing and winnowing these. Weeding *urad* fields. Ploughing fields for the pea crop. Sowing peas and gram.
Kartik (October-November)	Harvesting *choti juar.* Watching *Khalians.* Sowing wheat. Weeding *urad* fields. Harvesting *urad* and *bajra.* Threshing and winnowing these. Making *Kyaris* in wheat fields.
Aghan (November-December)	Wheat and pea fields irrigated (if no rains).
Poos (December-January)	Wheat and pea fields irrigated (if no rains).

MARKETS

There is no market in Mohana, but there are bi-weekly markets close by at Kandion, and in two neighbouring villages. Thursdays and Sundays are the market days at Kandion, which is three miles away from Mohana on the way to Lucknow. The Kandion market is a big one in which all sorts of articles including cloth, utensils, grain and spices are available. Many of the villagers go to this market. The Raja Mandi market is open on Tuesdays and Saturdays. It is a big grain market and many people go to it, but preference is given to the Kandion market, first, because it is very near to Lucknow and the prices there are more or less equal

to the Lucknow prices; and secondly, from Kandion it is easy to go to Daliganj, a Lucknow grain market, if the required articles are not available at Kandion or if the prices there are too high. The market at Parsi is open on Mondays and Fridays. This is not popular among the villagers, as it is not a grain market. Salt, sugar, spices, etc., are available here, and it is only two miles away from Mohana, but the villagers go to it only in case of urgent need.

In spite of the existence of these markets, the villagers go to Daliganj, Lucknow, to sell their grain because there the rates are higher than in the villages. Pal Singh and Kalloo Kalwar who used to do the business of grain-selling generally sold their grain in Daliganj. The villagers go to Daliganj to purchase shoes, cloth and utensils, for in their opinion, there they can get goods of quality at reasonable rates. Moreover, a few villagers who are regular visitors to Lucknow (either working in the city or taking milk there daily) often purchase articles in Lucknow for themselves, and also for others when asked to do so.

In the villages, there are a few shops which supply articles of daily use. These shops sell the following commodities: spices, sugar, jaggery, bidi, tobacco, mustard oil, coconut oil, kerosene oil, dry colours, potatoes, onions, sweets, etc. There are three shops in Mohana, those of Kalloo Kalwar, Prabhu Kalwar and Becha Ahir. That of Becha Ahir is a recent one, say about four years old. In the beginning, it was a very small establishment. However, by and by, Becha Ahir raised the status of his shop quite on par with the shop of Kalloo Kalwar. There were two other small shops also. Both were at Jodh Singh's house; one was run by Jodh's son Narain Singh, and the other by Shankar Singh. Both shops were closed as they could not be run successfully.

WEIGHTS AND MEASURES USED IN THE VILLAGE

For the sale and purchase of sugar, spices, jaggery, salt, oil, *ghee* and other such commodities, the following weights are used in the village:

	Weights	Local terms
1.	¼ Chhatak	Paun chhatanki
2.	½ Chhatak (1/32 Seer)	Adh chhatanki
3.	1 Chhatak (1/16 Seer)	Chhatanki
4.	½ Pawa (1/8 Seer)	Adh Pai
5.	1 Pawa (1/4 Seer)	Pauaa
6.	½ Seer (1/2 Seer)	Adh sera
7.	1 Seer (1 Seer)	Ser

Generally the village shopkeepers have all weighing equipments which include a crude balance and weights.

For weighing large quantities of grain the following weights are used.

	Weights	Local terms
1.	2½ Seers	Dhaia
2.	5 Seers	Panseri
3.	10 Seers	Das Seri
4.	20 Seers	Adh Maund or Bis Ser
5.	40 Seers	Maund

In the village *dhaia* is commonly used and the other four are only rarely used. Only three people in the village, Raj Singh, Kalloo Kalwar and Badloo Nai, have these weights. They are not commonly used because the village has its own weighing system, which is not standard and is known as *kachcha tol* (*kachcha* weighing). The *panseri* of *kachcha tol* is equivalent to two seers of standard weight and a maund is equal to 16 standard seer or eight *panseris*. The village *panseri* is a big stone or baked brick weighing two seers. To weigh a maund, one has to weigh eight times with a *panseri*. The *kachi tol* of maunds and *panseri* is allowed only within the village. In markets, only standard weights are used. The use of small weights like *tola*, *masha* and *rati* are not very common in the village, but the villagers know these weights. To weigh one *tola*, they weigh an equivalent of the weight of five rupee coins. The normal weights of different articles differ from one another. For instance:

1 maund of grain	40 Seers
1 maund of fuel	60 Seers (wood)
1 maund of *khoa*	46 Seers (solidified milk)
1 maund of vegetables	46 Seers
1 maund of bran	48 Seers

To weigh wood and jaggery in large quantities, the big balance known as *kanta* is used. The ordinary balance is used to weigh other commodities like meat, seed, sugar, etc. The pans of the balance are either bought in Lucknow, in which case they are made of iron, or they are locally made from bamboo sticks or *jhakar* (dry stems of *arhar* pulse). The beam is purchased in Lucknow. Weights are of iron and bear the seal of the factory.

LIQUID MEASURES

Milk. It is measured in *pawas* and seers, one seer being equal to four *pawas*. Either tin-made measures, bought in Lucknow, or equivalent glasses or *tolas* (metal jugs) are used, generally the latter. A *tola* of 18 *chhatak* capacity is used to measure one seer of milk.

Oil. Though oil is generally weighed it is also measured. The measures for oil are usually made of clay. Small components of a seer of oil, say a *chhatak* or half a *pawa*, are always measured. Thus oil is either measured or weighed, but *ghee* is always weighed.

Liquor. This is sold in bottles of two sizes, one having 10 *chhataks* and the other having 12 *chhataks*. Half a bottle is known as an *adah* and half an *adha* a *pawa*.

Cloth. Cloth is measured by the hand. A hand means the length from the elbow to the tip of the middle finger. Two hands are considered equal to one yard. Sale and purchase of cloth within the village are rare.

TAXATION

Poor as they are, the villagers have to pay taxes of three kinds.

Agricultural tax. This is collected twice a year, once after the *kharif* crop, i.e., on or before September 30, and the second time

after the *rabi* crop, i.e., on or before March 31. The total sum realised from this village as agricultural tax is about Rs. 4,563 per year. The rate of taxation varies from Rs. 2 to Rs. 10 per *bigha* according to the fertility of the land.

Those who wish to pay both the agricultural taxes at one time are allowed to do so but generally due to their unsound financial position, the villagers are unable to do so. On the other hand most of them usually pay even the half-yearly amount in instalments, with the result that the tax-collector is required to come to the village twice or thrice a month on an average. If the tax is not collected and the official fails to deposit the sum in the Malihabad Tehsil on the due date, his pay is withheld, hence the tax-collectors resort to various methods to realise the tax. These methods include the confiscation of movable and immovable property for auction. However, those who are able to grease the palm of the tax-collector escape his stern hand for he finds some loop-hole or the other to shelter them.

Irrigation tax. In the case of fields which are close to the canal and to which water is taken directly from the canal, the tax is Rs. 9 per *bigha*, and for fields which are far away and which are irrigated by means of the *beri* system, the rate is Rs. 4.50 per *bigha*. The tax is collected by the *Giledar* and the *Patraul* of the Canal Department who go to the village for this purpose. In the village they stay with the *Sarpanch*. It is announced to the villagers that they should go to the *Sarpanch's* house and get their canal tax bills. The *Patraul* is the canal-guard and he is expected to know who use the canal water and how much land is watered by it. But often there are many mistakes in the bills, and the villagers get them corrected. Sometimes they are not eager to have the errors put right, because unless the official is honest the correction of bills means giving a bribe.

The villagers can escape paying the canal tax, or at least a part of it, if they are willing to bribe the *Patraul*. In May, 1954, it was alleged that the *Patraul* went to the village and took a bribe of Rs. 2 to Rs. 5 from every farmer, assuring them that they will not have to pay a mite as Irrigation Tax for the melon crop, and that he would make some concession in the same tax for the other crops also. Such an attractive proposal could not be turned down by the

villagers who are eager to save money. In this way the *Patraul* earned about a thousand rupees. Besides receiving the bribe he was entertained to a good feast by the prominent villagers. But in September, at the time when irrigation taxes are collected, the villagers realised the big blunder they had committed, for the *Patraul* whom they bribed was no longer in the Canal Department, and a new man had taken his place. The villagers could not escape paying the tax.

Tax on vehicles owned. This is the third levy. The licence fee for a cycle is Rs. 9.37. It is the same for a bullock cart also. Only these two vehicles are found in the village. The methods of collecting this tax and the villagers' reaction towards them are best described in the words of one who was present at the time of collecting the tax in 1955: "Collection was made at the house of Thakur M. Singh. A *Munshi* (clerk) and a peon were there. It appeared that none in the village paid the tax regularly. B-Barhai had to pay the least amount, and he had not paid the tax for two years. The *Munshi* read out the names of defaulters one by one from a register, and the peon repeated the names aloud. The villagers tried their best not to appear before the *Munshi*, and those who went to him generally promised to pay it later. There were some who made part payments, but no one paid the dues in full. According to rules, the villagers are expected to go to Lucknow and obtain their licence from the Municipal office, but the villagers never do it. The *Munshi* comes to the village when his office intimates him of the names of the defaulters. This time he had come after three years.

"Pal Singh owns a bullock cart which he had not been using for four years, but his name was still among the tax-payers. He had sent four or five applications to the District Board Office to have his name struck off, but in his ignorance he had not taken any receipt for the applications. The result was that he had not been favoured by any action in the office; on the other hand a notice was issued to him by the Board asking him to pay the tax. Pal Singh submitted another application to the Board Office and this time took care to take a receipt. His name was struck off the register, but only after the amount had soared to four times of what he should have paid. Pal Singh requested the *Munshi* to cancel the

extra amount since it was through no fault of his that it was shown against his name. The *Munshi* expressed his inability to do so and politely told him to be sensible enough to pay the dues or else his cattle would be taken into the Board's custody and would ultimately be auctioned. Pal paid out Rs. 10 and promised to give the balance later.

"While the collection was going on, a mistake was discovered. Baiju Ahir's name appeared in the register under a wrong parentage, but the villagers got it corrected by the *Munshi*. Baiju was not present at that time, and he was accused of having entered a false name for his father in the register in order to avoid payment of the tax. The *Munshi* swore to deal with him later.

"Both the *Munshi* and peon were reluctant to grant more time to the defaulters because it meant that they would have to come to the village again. But since the villagers could not pay their dues at once, they had to be given more time.

"As soon as the *Munshi* and the peon went away, the villagers gathered together and began criticising the Government. Pal, who had had to pay four times the sum due, was very bitter. His language was abusive. Right from the *Munshi* up to the Board, and even the Congress Government—everyone whom he thought concerned in the affair—he felt he had a right to abuse. He said that the Government was increasing the taxes. Others joined him and attacked the Government for the increase in taxes. One of them said that soon the Government would impose taxes on wives. Another said that it might levy taxes even on the air which they breathed."

In spite of all this clamorous opposition they have to pay all the taxes imposed by the Government in addition to gratifying the officials concerned now and then.

CONSOLIDATION OF LAND

The villagers on the whole are against the idea of consolidation of land, and they were perturbed when in 1954 the *lekhpal* during one of his visits to the village told them about the Government scheme of consolidation of land-holdings which would take place in the near future. The advantages of consolidating land-holdings are

known to the villager, for Nath Singh had listened to a speech on this subject delivered by someone. They are aware that it is easier to manage consolidated holdings than scattered ones. But generally they are apt to cite only the disadvantages. The objections are:

1. The artisan castes will not be given any land, and that means a severe blow to them.
2. It is well and good for a man if he has to give up a strip of barren land and get a good plot instead, but the one who has to forgo a piece of fertile land for one of an inferior type would not be in favour of the scheme.
3. If the scheme is effected, it will mean that a man will get only one type of land and the result will be that he cannot grow a variety of crops as he does.
4. The poor landowners (a dying breed) feel that under this scheme the rich would become richer, and the poor poorer, while the rich feel that they will lose most of their lands.

There are a few who think that ultimately consolidation of holdings would prove profitable, but the general reaction is one of opposition. However, so far nothing has been done in Mohana towards consolidating land-holdings.

OTHER OCCUPATIONS

Besides agriculture, the villagers are employed in various occupational fields, for there is still a survival of the traditional caste-professions.

The Pandit. There is the village *Pandit*, who is considered to be the intermediary between the gods and the people and performs the various religious and ceremonial rituals. He owns some land, and in addition to his income from that, he receives money and gifts when he participates in festivals and ceremonies. But since the villagers are generally poor, not very much comes into his hands. However, now and then he has a stroke of good luck, as when he performed a marriage ceremony in Kutwa, a neighbouring village, in the house of a rich man, and received Rs. 65 in cash and gifts

worth Rs. 100. Often the money that he gets is squandered, for he indulges in certain vices.

Ahir. Supplying milk is the Ahir caste-profession, though now most of them are agriculturists. Besides the Ahir, others also have taken to the milk business. The total milk supplied to Lucknow by Mohana is about two maunds, half of which is carried by the Ahir. All the milk meant for sale is sold to the village milk-vendors at three seers a rupee, and these vendors take the milk to Lucknow, and sell it there at two and three-quarter seers a rupee.

Pasi. The Pasi as a caste are considered most reliable and are employed as *Goraits* or field watchers. In the zamindari days, a land-owner appointed a *Gorait* individually or two or more land-owners jointly appointed a *Gorait* to watch over their fields. The practice still persists after the zamindari abolition when practically all peasants have become land-owners. At present there are four *Goraits* in the village and they keep watch practically over all the village fields. (Names of these four *Goraits* could be had.) In return for watching the fields, the *Goraits* get two seers of grain per *bigha* at every harvest. They are held responsible for all thefts in the fields and can be asked to pay compensation for any loss. However, the usual punishment for any loss is a severe rebuke from the land-owner.

Besides watching the fields, the *Goraits* are required to perform other jobs too. As they are very reliable, valuable property is left in their charge on such occasions as a marriage. Further, the *Goraits* work as messengers, trusted with secret and confidential messages. For such services they receive special payment in cash or kind.

Formerly some Pasi used to rear pigs, but this has now been given up. L-Pasi who stuck to this profession up to 1952 had as his regular customers the Pasi and Chamar of the village and also the Kathik of Lucknow. The pigs were purchased when they were very young, and looked after tenderly, and when old enough they were fattened and killed. They were killed by strangling with ropes, or their hearts were pierced with a bamboo shaft. Once L-Pasi, when talking of pigs, eulogized them as being very gentle, extremely intelligent, and strictly vegetarian. They do

not attack anybody, unless offended, have a good memory and recognise the voices of their masters, and also sense danger very quickly. This last quality made it very difficult for the owner to catch them for killing and they were generally caught in a pond. They fetched a handsome price, for their meat was sold at 25 nP a seer. Pigs suffer from two very common diseases—*Sujwa* (swelling of the throat) and *Chapka* (splitting of hooves). These diseases are fatal, for the witch-doctors cannot cure them, and the villagers make no attempt to have expert medical aid for them. Most probably, this business of rearing pigs and slaughtering them was given up because it was a cruel profession. At present almost all the Pasi of Mohana are agriculturists.

Barhai. There are only three Barhai families in the village. Of these one family has given up the Barhai caste-profession of carpentry and taken to agriculture. The other two families have stuck to their hereditary occupation, though they also own a few *bighas* of land.

The Barhai have fixed rates of payment for their services to the villagers. The rate is fixed according to the number of ploughs the client owns, and the Barhai take six seers of grain per plough at every harvest. This payment is only for the repair of agricultural implements. If a client needs new implements he must provide the wood and other articles necessary for the making of the implements. For other work such as making doors, windows, furniture, etc., the villagers pay in cash. The usual rate is Rs. 2 per day. When the Barhai are called to work in other villages the rate is higher and differs according to the nature of the work. If the job is light, like repairing bullock carts and making stools, the rate is Rs. 2.50 per day. If the work is heavy, like making doors, windows, bullock carts, etc., it is Rs. 3 per day. Besides the payment in money, they also get meals for the day, but when the Barhai work for Chamar, Pasi, Dhobi and Bhaksor, they ask for *seedha* instead of meals. R. N. is an expert Barhai of the village. He learnt the carpenter's art in Lucknow and makes chairs, tables and almirahs, but his mastery of the craft does not fetch him more money than what his fellow caste-men earn.

Kumhar. Having forsaken their own profession of pottery, the Kumhar of Mohana depend on agriculture for their livelihood. H. is the only exception and he alone manages to fulfil all the needs

of the village as regards earthenware. There are about a score of Kumhar in the village, but hardly two or three of them know how to make any earthenware. Even H. goes to his wheel only when someone asks him to make something and gives an advance. The advance generally is 6 nP, the rest of the price being paid when the article is finished and ready to be delivered to the customer. H. generally insists on cash payment, but if a client cannot pay him in cash, he accepts grain instead, but in every case, he delivers the goods only after he has received payment for them. The black soil of Bari Taal is most suited for his work, since the vessels made out of it do not crack when heated. The mud from the pond is scooped out, thrashed with a wooden club and kneaded with water till it absorbs no more of it. This lump of clay is placed on the wheel, revolving at great speed, and vessels of different sizes and shapes are made. Those made by H. are *kulhars* (tumblers), *karwa* (short pitcher-like vessels, with rounded bottoms), *handi* (small pitchers), *divas* (small saucer-shaped vessels, used as lamps), etc. H. has a limited clientele. The villagers of Mohana and the nearby Purvas are his customers. This profession is not lucrative; H. has stuck to it only because he is too old to take to any other strenuous work, but he too has to supplement his income by selling *ghee*, jaggery, etc. He has never gone into a large-scale production of his ware, first, because it does not bring in good money, and secondly, because he is not an expert at it. Taking the ware to other markets is a cumbersome process involving a considerable risk of breakage and hence he is content with the village market.

Lohar. The only Lohar family in the village has stuck to its traditional profession of blacksmithy. The land at its disposal is limited. Its clientele is spread over many villages. The payment is six seers of grain at every harvest from the clients in Mohana, and cash from those outside. Even within Mohana cash payment is demanded for making new implements. P-Lohar is a blacksmith of repute and he is always surrounded with customers. Business is good, and he is good, and he does not have to turn to agriculture. He gets so much grain in the harvesting season that he does not have to go to other markets to sell his goods. He has his forge in his house complete with furnace and bellows, and his work goes on smoothly. Repair of cycles is an additional

job he often takes up and he gets extra cash for this.

Nai. The Nai are the professional barbers, but they have also adopted other means of subsistence such as agriculture and selling milk. Their help is needed in almost all the rituals observed from the cradle to the funeral pyre. Sometimes they work as messengers also. At the festival of *Janmashtmi* a *Nai* is required to help the *Pandit.* For this he gets a quarter of the fee given to the *Pandit.* He is entitled to the same share in death ceremonies also. The women of the Nai caste also serve in various ceremonies and receive remuneration for the services rendered.

The Nai charge 6 nP for shaving and 12 nP for a haircut. Those who cannot pay this give some grain in lieu of it. Further the Nai receive *tihai* (six seers of grain at every harvest) from their *jajmans.* The income of the Nai vary greatly. For instance S.Nai gets Rs. 15 on an average every month, while the average monthly income of G.R. is Rs. 4, but the latter supplements his income by selling milk.

Dhobi. Though they have turned their hands to agriculture the Dhobi have still stuck to their traditional profession of washing clothes. Every man of this caste in Mohana washes clothes. G-Dhobi has more land than his fellow caste-men and so he washes clothes only for a few people. The Dhobi have their clientele fixed, and the villages and *purvas* are divided among them. As a rule no Dhobi will wash the clothes of another Dhobi's client. Below is shown the distribution of villages and *purvas* among them.

Dh-Dhobi	Mohana, Balak and Amarpur
G-Din Dhobi	Mirzapur and Mohana
D-Dhobi	Lalpur, Balapur and Mohana
F-Dhobi	Lalpur, Balapur and Mohana
P-Dhobi	Rampur and Mohana
N-Dhobi	Lalpur, Balapur and Mohana
M-Dhobi	Amarpur and Mohana
G-Dhobi	Amarpur and Mohana

It is seen that the clientele of all the Dhobi is confined to a few villages, viz., Mohana, Balak, Amarpur, Mirzapur, Lalpur, Balapur and Rampur. Besides these, every Dhobi washes clothes

for people in Lucknow, but except for G-Dhobi, they have very few clients in Lucknow, and they go there once a fortnight or so. G-Din Dhobi has more clients in Lucknow than in the villages. The Dhobi carry the clothes to and from Lucknow on their heads, or on cycles or on donkeys.

Washing charges are on the *tihai* basis, i.e. six seers of grain at every harvest. If clothes are to be washed urgently, then payment has to be made in cash. Clothes of Lucknow clients are washed for cash payment. For clothes that need not be starched the charge is 9 nP per piece. Ironing charges are 6 nP per garment. The Dhobi use soap, washing soda, and *Rehu mitti* (a particular kind of soil) to wash clothes and rice-starch to starch them. Wet clothes are not hung on ropes to dry, but are spread out on grassy places.

Gadaria. There are four households of Gadaria. Formerly they were herdsmen. Theirs was a profitable business. They used to sell the raw wool and also prepare coarse rugs. In zamindari times they supplied one rug every year to the zamindars whose tenants they were. This practice was naturally given up with the zamindari abolition, and now their very profession has been given up, for there spread a disease among the animals, and a great number of sheep died. This resulted in a great loss to the Gadaria and they were forced to give up their business. Now agriculture is their only means of subsistence.

Chamar. All the Chamar of the village are not agriculturists, as some of them have no land. Those who possess no land, and those who possess very little land, work as agricultural labourers and are paid either monthly or daily. Monthly wages do not exceed Rs. 15 but those employed on a monthly basis are given a cotton shirt every year. The rates of daily wages are 50 nP for a man and 37 nP for a woman. Women are never employed on the monthly basis. The Chamar children begin working when they are four or five years of age. They work in the fields of others in the harvesting season. Very rarely they are paid in cash, the usual form of their payment being in grain.

A particular section of Chamar called Gausai remove carcasses, and they get the skin of the animal as payment, but they are obliged to give a *nadha* (a leather strip used for tying bullocks to the plough)

and a *chapka* (a leather whip) to the owner of the animal, for which they get some grain. Formerly, one Chamar used to make shoes, but he has migrated to another village, and there is no one in the village now who does this work.

The services of Chamar are requested in various ceremonies. Generally they do the menial work like sweeping and cleaning, and looking after animals. For such services they receive remuneration in the form of food, grain or cash.

Bhaksor. This is the only caste which has not taken to agriculture. Bhaksor are neither land-owners nor agricultural labourers; therefore for their subsistence they depend upon their caste-profession of basket-work. They make *soops* (winnowing baskets), *beri* (a hollow structure made of bamboo, used for lifting water from ponds), other kinds of baskets, etc. There is a great demand for *soops* both in the village and outside, because they are required in every household for cleaning grain. So the making of *soop* is good business. A *soop* is sold at 50-75 nP. The Bhaksor sell their articles in the village and also take their wares to markets and *melas* in the neighbouring villages. At marriages they supply the *daal* (a basket in which articles like *sindoor* are kept). In return they get Rs. 1.25 plus some grain. Further they are engaged to organise the band in marriages. The charges vary and are settled beforehand. They also repair and re-skin *dhols* for which they charge 50-62 nP per *dhol.* In festival and *poojas* they beat the drum and get *prasad* and a few coins in return. Also they are engaged by *panchayat* leaders to announce by beat of the drum the time and place of *panchayat* meetings.

The services of a Bhaksorin (wife of a Bhaksor) are needed by all castes, high or low, for she is a midwife and cuts the umbilical cord at child-birth. Besides this, she massages the mother for five days till the *chatti* (sixth day after child-birth) ceremony. The Bhaksorin are paid in kind or cash. They are usually given food on the occasion of *chatti* and five seers of grain in the case of a male child or two and a half seers in the case of a female child.

DIVISION OF LABOUR ON THE BASIS OF SEX

As is evident from what has been stated so far, except in the high

castes, the women also have to work as hard as the men, if not harder, to feed the many hungry mouths at home. Below is given the division of labour on the basis of sex.

Caste	*Men*	*Women*
1. Thakur	1. Agriculture 2. Animal care 3. Marketing	1. Domestic work 2. Girls under ten take food to the men working in the fields
2. Brahmin	1. Religious activities 2. Agriculture 3. Animal care 4. Marketing	1. Domestic work
3. Ahir	1. Agriculture 2. Animal care 3. Marketing 4. Milking cows and buffaloes 5. Selling milk 6. Looking after others' animals	1. Domestic work 2. Assist the men in fields 3. Milking animals
4. Pasi	1. Agriculture 2. Animal care 3. Marketing 4. Watching fields 5. Work as messengers 6. Work as labourers	1. Domestic work 2. Assist the men in fields 3. Work in others' fields as wage earners 4. Domestic work in the houses of high caste people
5. Barhai	1. Agriculture 2. Animal care 3. Marketing 4. Carpentry in the village and outside	1. Domestic work 2. Assist the men both in the fields and at the carpenter's bench
6. Kumhar	1. Agriculture 2. Animal care 3. Marketing 4. Pottery	1. Domestic work 2. Assist the men in the fields and at the potter's wheel
7. Lohar	1. Agriculture 2. Animal care 3. Marketing 4. Blacksmithy	1. Domestic work 2. Assist the men in the fields
8. Nai	1. Agriculture 2. Animal care 3. Marketing 4. Work as barbers 5. Work as messengers 6. Assist the Pandit in ceremonies	1. Domestic work 2. Help the men in the fields 3. Do certain work in ceremonies

Caste	*Men*	*Women*
9. Dhobi	1. Agriculture 2. Animal care 3. Marketing 4. Washing clothes and all work connected with it	1. Domestic work 2. Help the men to wash and iron clothes 3. Work in fields 4. Do certain work in ceremonies
10. Gadaria	1. Agriculture 2. Animal care 3. Marketing	1. Domestic work 2. Assist the men in the fields
11. Chamar	1. Agriculture 2. Animal care 3. Marketing 4. Work as labourers 5. Serve as *Harvaah* 6. Gausais skin dead animals	1. Domestic work 2. Animal care 3. Help the men in field 4. Work as labourers in others' fields
12. Bhaksor	1. Making *soops*, *beris* 2. Selling these 3. Repairing *dhols*	1. Domestic work 2. Attend on expectant mothers
13. Kathik	1. Agriculture 2. Animal care 3. Marketing 4. Professional dancing 5. Dancing on festival and other occasions 6. Business (small shops)	1. Domestic work 2. Look after shops in the absence of the men
14. Kalwar	1. Agriculture 2. Animal care 3. Marketing 4. Business (small shops)	1. Domestic work 2. Look after shops when the men are away
15. Kurmi	There is only one man to represent this caste and he is an agriculturist. He does all the work at home and in the fields.	

ANIMAL HUSBANDRY

Cows, goats, bulls and buffaloes are reared by all castes. The animals are set free in the morning in the charge of someone, generally an Ahir, and they are driven home in the evening. The one who looks after these animals is paid in kind, i.e., grain for looking after the cows, bulls and buffaloes, and 25 nP per month for looking after a goat. Except a few, the villagers generally have one or two animals, sufficient to meet their needs.

By-products. When an animal dies, the carcass is removed by the Gausai Chamar. The carcass is taken away from the village to an

open space where it is skinned and the rest of the body is left to be eaten up by crows, vultures and wild animals. The raw skin is sold in Lucknow. This is a good source of income for the Gausai Chamar. A sub-group of the Chamar is known as Har-binna (bone-collectors). The Har-binna of Lucknow collect the bones and horns and sell them. Har-binna Chamar are considered very low. There is no one belonging to this group in Mohana.

The skin is sold, or sometimes the Gausai Chamar get it cleaned and tanned to make shoes. Belts and whips are also made. These Chamar use the hair of the animals' tails to make ropes. These ropes are used for tying animals and for drawing water.

ANIMAL DISEASES

Ghuturua. When an animal has an attack of this disease its body swells up and the skin hangs loosely and it seems as if water has collected in the skin. This disease often proves fatal. The native remedy is to apply warm mustard oil mixed with *geru* (a kind of red earth) on the body. Another remedy is scarification with very hot iron. This treatment is known as *dagna.* When treated this way, the skin of the animal often receives burns, and so the first remedy is commonly used.

Mand. This disease is caused by severe cold, and the animal's body becomes swollen. The only remedy known to the villagers is fomentation with hot earthen pots.

Pokni (Dysentery). An animal suffering from this disease shows signs of weakness and listlessness. The villagers consult the local *vaids* of Nagra-man or Bitholi villages. The *vaids* prescribe herbs. If it is winter, the animal is given mustard oil and turmeric.

Constipation. The medicine for this ailment is a mixture of salt and *heeng*, or old jaggery and *heeng.*

Siyua. This disease causes the neck of the animal to swell and the skin to hang loosely. There is pain too and the animal cannot eat or drink. If it is not checked the whole body is affected. The neck is scarified with hot iron.

Kanta (Corns). These growths appear on the tongue, and they are

removed by the Chamar with a *rapi* (a thick, sharp iron instrument).

To cure the stricken animals villagers often get the help of witch-doctors. Sometimes the animals are taken to the veterinary hospital at Bakshi-ka-Talab.

LIFE-HISTORY POINTS

The maximum life-span of a bullock, according to the villagers, is 15 years, while that of a cow is 10 years. A cow starts giving milk at the age of four, and a bull is trained for agricultural work at the same age or even a year earlier. V. Singh of Mohana is considered to be a very experienced man in recognising age, breed, etc. He advises villagers who want to buy cows or bulls. According to V. Singh no tooth appears till the animal is three years old. In the third year one pair of teeth appears. He gave the following correlation between an animal's teeth and its age:

2 teeth	3 years
4 teeth	4-5 years
6 teeth	6-7 years
8 teeth	8 years

When an animal reaches its eighth year, its growth stops. Anyone wishing to buy a cow or bull will not buy an animal that has eight teeth, for it is either old or is just getting to be so.

SPECIAL CARE

Generally salt is given to the animals, especially to cows and bullocks, to improve their appetite. About half a *pawa* of salt is given each animal once a week.

In winter the animals are kept as far as possible under cover, and *jhool* of *tat* (covering of *tat*) is put on their backs to protect them against the cold. In the height of summer, the animals are again kept under cover to avoid heat-stroke.

Table XII

ANIMAL CENSUS TAKEN IN 1954

Name	*Caste*	*Calf*	*Bull*	*Buffalo*	*Cow*	*Goat*	*Total*
1. Kishan	Kumhar	..	2	1	3	..	6
2. Hira		..	2	4	..	..	6
3. Jagdeo		..	2	..	1	3	6
4. Tanni		..	2	..	..	..	2
5. Prabhu		..	2	..	..	..	2
		..	10	5	4	3	22
1. Maiku	Gadaria	..	2	..	..	3	5
2. Kodi		..	3	1	1	..	5
3. Sita Ram		..	2	..	2	..	4
		..	7	1	3	3	14
1. Jagannath	Barhai	..	..	..	1	..	1
2. Balgovind		1	4	2	1	3	11
3. Ram Nath		..	2	..	..	..	2
		1	6	2	2	3	14
1. Dooban	Dhobi	..	2	..	..	..	2
2. Ghorroo		1	3	2	..	..	6
3. Faqiray		..	2	1	..	..	3
4. Dhonde		1	2	..	1	..	4
5. Ganga Din		..	1	..	..	4	5
6. Poosa		..	2	..	..	6	8
		2	12	3	1	10	28
1. Ajodhya	Ahir	3	2	..	5	..	10
2. Roopan		1	2	2	2	..	7
3. Chotan		..	2	1	2	..	5
4. Saheb		2	2	2	2	..	8
5. Santoo		2	..	2	2	..	6
6. Ausan		1	2	2	..	..	5
7. Beeha		..	2	2	..	..	4
8. Chandi		3	2	..	2	2	9
9. Kaudhai		2	2	1	1	..	6
10. Nanga		..	..	..	..	..	..
11. Garibe		2	2	..	3	..	7
12. Tori		..	..	..	..	..	..
13. Sarjoo		..	..	1	..	..	1
14. Nanha		4	1	..	..	..	5
15. Naiju		2	2	..	..	..	4
16. Dularey		2	2	1	..	..	5
17. Bhabhuti		2	2	1	..	..	5
		26	25	15	19	2	87

	Name	Caste	Calf	Bull	Buffalo	Cow	Goat	Total
1.	Parmeshwar	Pasi	..	2	..	2	3	7
2.	Dhana		..	2	1	..	6	9
3.	Shivcharan		..	2	3	..	..	5
4.	Parmeshvar		..	2	..	..	..	2
5.	Dewan		..	2	..	1	..	3
6.	Sitai		2	2	..	1	..	5
7.	Faquiray		..	2	..	3	..	5
8.	Antar		..	3	..	1	..	4
9.	Rameshwar		1	2	..	..	..	3
10.	Bharat		..	1	..	1	..	2
11.	Lartoo		..	2	1	1	2	6
12.	Kalidin		..	1	..	..	..	1
13.	Lachman		..	1	..	1	..	2
14.	Putti		..	2	..	..	4	6
15.	Balloo		..	2	..	1	..	3
16.	Vipat		..	2	..	3	7	12
17.	Durga		..	3	..	2	4	9
			3	33	5	17	26	84
1.	Sewak	Bhaksor	1	..	..	2	6	9
			1	..	..	2	6	9
1.	Parag	Lohar	..	2	2	1	..	5
			..	2	2	1	..	5
1.	Lekhai	Chamar	..	2	..	..	..	2
2.	Hari		1	..	..	..	..	1
3.	Hublal		..	1	..	1	..	2
4.	Khoosala		..	..	..	..	..	..
5.	Palhai		..	..	..	..	..	..
6.	Khevan		1	2	..	3	..	6
7.	Sakoona		..	2	..	..	..	2
8.	Laltoo		1	3	..	1	..	5
9.	Durjan		..	2	..	2	..	4
10.	Keerha		..	..	1	2	..	3
11.	Kaloo		1	1	..	1	2	5
12.	Maiku I		1	2	1	..	..	4
13.	Bhallar		..	1	..	2	..	3
14.	Kitab		..	1	1	1	..	3
15.	Maiku II		..	3	..	3	25	31
16.	Nanhey		1	2	1	..	..	4
17.	Lala		..	2	..	..	2	4
18.	Maiku III		..	1	..	..	..	1
19.	Chain		..	2	..	2	..	4
20.	Mahabir		..	1	..	..	..	1
21.	Pooran		..	1	..	1	..	2

	Name	Caste	*Calf*	*Bull*	*Buffalo*	*Cow*	*Goat*	*Total*
22.	Ratan	Chamar	1	..	..	..	..	1
23.	Roopan		..	1	..	1	..	2
24.	Pooran Bhagat		..	2	2	..	..	4
25.	Gokran		..	..	..	..	..	..
26.	Chitai		..	..	..	..	..	..
			7	32	6	20	29	94
1.	Sunderlal	Kalwar	2	1	..	2	..	5
2.	Prabhu		..	1	..	..	3	4
			2	2	..	2	3	9
1.	Ayodhya Singh	Thakur	1	2	..	2	..	5
2.	Nathura Singh		..	2	..	1	24	27
3.	Iqbal Singh		1	2	..	1	3	7
4.	Sukh Raj Singh		..	2	2	..	32	36
5.	Murari Singh		..	2	..	2	..	4
6.	Gaya Bux Singh		..	2	..	..	5	7
7.	Raghunath Singh		..	2	..	1	..	3
8.	Jagmohan Singh		1	2	1	2	..	6
9.	[illegible] Singh		1	2	..	1	..	4
10.	Hardeo Singh		2	1	3	2	..	8
11.	Maneshwar Singh		..	1	..	1	..	2
12.	Vishwanath Singh		1	2	..	2	2	7
13.	Ram Pal Singh		1	1	1	..	..	3
14.	Jagdeo Singh		..	2	1	1	..	4
15.	Ganesh Singh		..	2	..	5	2	9
16.	Jadunath Singh		2	1	1	1	..	5
17.	Ahtaran Singh		1	2	1	1	..	5
18.	Maharaj Singh		3	1	1	2	..	7
19.	Raghunandan Singh		..	2	2	..	3	7
20.	[illegible] Singh		..	2	1	2	..	5
21.	[illegible] Singh		..	2	1	1	..	4
22.	Sumer Singh		..	..	..	2	..	2
			14	37	15	30	71	167
1.	Janga	Kurmi	..	..	1	..	..	1
			..	..	1	..	..	1
1.	Ram Narain	Brahmin	..	1	..	1	..	2
2.	Kishori Baba		..	..	..	..	..	..
3.	Thakur Din		..	..	..	2	..	2
			..	1	..	3	..	4

WAGES AND SALARIES

The rates of payment for various kinds of labour besides those already mentioned are:

1. Carrying sand or mud for construction of houses....Re. 1 per day.
2. Carrying melons on the head to Lucknow (weight not more than 30 *pacca seers*)....Re. 1.
3. Cart-hire for taking melons to Lucknow... 50 nP per maund.
4. Irrigating fields....Re. 1 per day.
5. Cleaning peas, winnowing grain, etc. (only women employed) ....50 nP per day.
6. Work connected with harvest such as reaping, threshing, winnowing etc.....One maund out of every 13 maunds.
7. There is also the *bojh* or weight system of payment to transfer the crop from the field to the *khalian* (one *bojh*: 20 seers) .... One *bojh* out of every 28 *bojhs*.
8. Then there is the *Batai* system also known as crop-sharing. In this system labourers do all the work from sowing the seed to cleaning and storing the grain after harvest, while the land-owners supply bullocks, tools and seeds. At the time of harvest the labourer, or the crop-sharer as he is known, gives from half to three-fourths of the total yield to the land-holder as his share, and takes the rest. The share of each is per prior agreement.

FISHING

The Pasi are expert anglers, but now it is no more their specialisation, since recently other castes like Chamar and Dhobi have adopted this pastime and taken away the monopoly of Pasi.

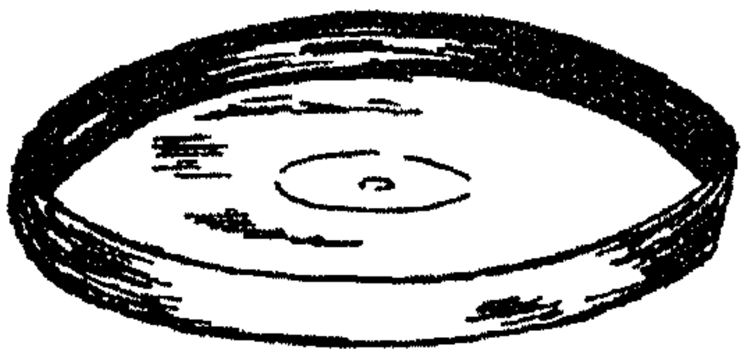
Of the three ponds, Rani Taal, Anglia Taal and Bari Taal, only one has any claim to be called a fishing pond. Rani Taal is out of the question altogether, as the catch is always very meagre. Anglia Taal cannot be utilised for fishing either as it is very deep. Moreover the canal-water which is released into it five or six times in a year floods the pond and the fish go out with the surplus water. There is some fishing carried on in the Bari Taal, but the frequent meagre catches, and also the lack of water in summer, hinder fishing

DOMESTIC AND COOKING UTENSILS USED IN THE VILLAGE

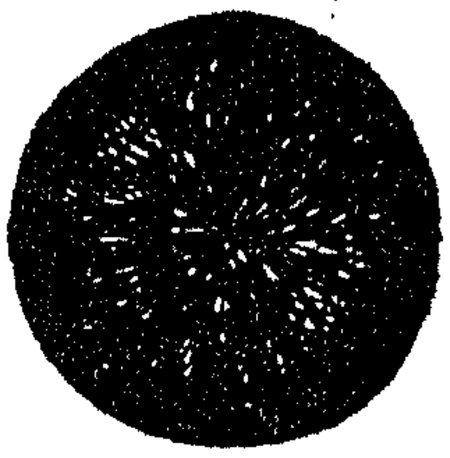
GILAS

BATLOIE

LOTA


THALI

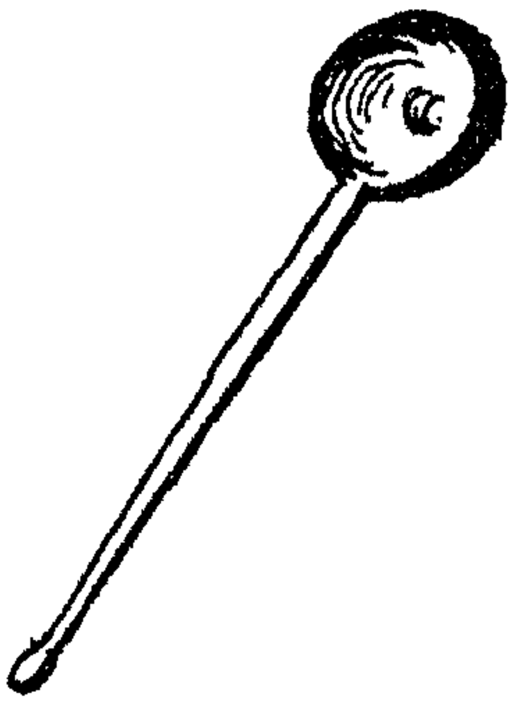
KATORA


TAVA

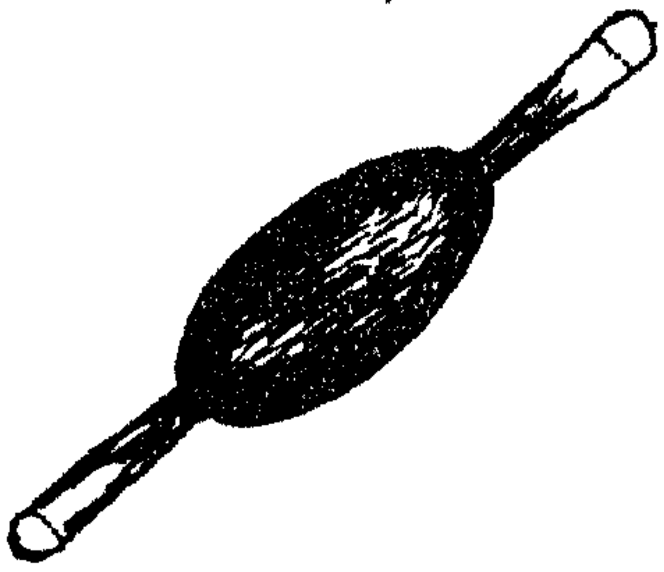
KARCHUL

SANSI

CHIMTA


CHIMCHA

KARAHI


BELAN

KATHAITI

from becoming a permanent source of income. This pond remains waterless in the months of *Chait*, *Baisakh* and *Jeth* (i.e. from the middle of March to the middle of June). In the rainy season the waters of the *taal* run into the Kukrail river, a subsidiary of river Gomti. Fishing in this *taal* is possible in December, January and February, but even in these months the catch is not very good. The total catch is auctioned. It is evident that fishing cannot become a permanent source of income in Mohana, and will remain only a seasonal diversion.

PROPERTY

Property is of two kinds, viz., immovable and movable. The category of immovable property includes land, both agricultural and non-agricultural, groves and trees, and houses; cattle, furniture, vehicles, money, ornaments, agricultural implements, etc., are reckoned as movable property.

Property is acquired by various means such as:

1. *Inheritance.* When the father dies, the property naturally goes to his sons, and should there be no sons, to his daughter or close relatives.
2. *Purchase.* It may happen that people in certain trades acquire a lot of money. With this money they buy land or build houses or convert it into ornaments.
3. *Clearing waste land.* Acquiring waste land and turning it into fertile fields or groves was never unknown in the village, but it has become more popular since the coming of difficult days, and the Government has encouraged everyone to grow more food.
4. *As reward for services rendered.* Pieces of land were often given to *praja* by the high castes as a token of gratitute. Land thus given away is called *mafi* land. But with the zamindari abolition this practice also naturally disappeared. There are instances when land or other forms of property were given in gratitude not only to the *praja*, but also to those on the higher rungs of the caste-ladder. The Pandit is often the recipient of cattle, land, clothes, money or utensils (besides his usual payments) as a mark of gratitude for his religious and ceremonial services.

5. *As payment.* Payment for services is in the form of both cash and kind. An instance worth mentioning here is that of Dr. Goel, the first to come to this village. He was a man of repute, for he had been to England and America. Then a quarter of the entire village land was owned by a Thakur, M. Singh, and managed by P. Mahraj, a Brahmin and a good friend of Singh's. One day it chanced that the wife of M. Singh fell ill, but not very ill. On the recommendation of P. Mahraj, Dr. Goel was summoned and he treated her with patent medicines. M. Singh's wife recovered. Dr. Goel produced the medical bill which showed the incredible sum of Rs. 2,000. P. Mahraj, a friend of Singh's and notorious as the secret friend of M. Singh's wife, first suggested, and then urged M. Singh, through his wife to give land instead of the money, and so into the hands of Dr. Goel passed most of the lands of M. Singh.
6. *Paying off debts.* The same doctor mentioned above used to lend money to the villagers, and if they could not repay it, they had to part with their lands. In this way about five-eighths of all the village land passed into the possession of the former. This was long ago. Leaving the doctor aside there are other money-lenders who take away the lands of their debtors when the latter fail to return the money.
7. *At marriage.* Property passes from one hand to another at marriages also. This is particularly so among caste Hindus, for among them, the bridegroom and his parents receive presents in cash and kind (usually ornaments, cattle or land) from the bride's father, brother and maternal uncle. This custom is prevalent among the well-to-do families of the low castes also.
8. *At death.* When an elderly person dies, leaving behind a prosperous line of children and grandchildren, some property in the shape of clothes, utensils (generally five in number), cots, beddings, etc., which the bereaved family thinks the deceased will get in the next world, is given to the Maha-Brahmin. A portion of this is given to the Nai. Sometimes, lands and trees are also given to the Brahmin, and again the Nai gets a share of the presents. While still on this subject, it might be enlightening to know the views of V. Singh (the ex-*Mukhien* of the village) on this custom. He says, 'The religious books while laying down

such injunctions (to give gifts to Brahmin) have given reasons for them (that the gifts are to the deceased) only because the *rishis* wanted to put forth some appealing reasons before the people to make them charitable to the poor, to check their acquisitive tendencies and to teach them the virtues of corporate living, good-neighbourliness and fellow feeling. Otherwise to give away a mango tree so that its fruit may reach the soul of the deceased in the other world makes no sense. Such explanations are not only childish, but also ridiculous.' He further goes on to say, 'In olden days people were simple and less sceptical of religious sayings and writings. But now men have become cleverer, and are little impressed by traditional explanations. The result is that people have turned out to be less generous and less helpful than before. The practice of alms-giving has declined, though the blame is generally thrown on the "difficult times". For a really large-hearted and generous man "difficult times" are no excuse.'

9. *Exploitation and unfair means.* Sometimes the rich and powerful villagers exploit the poor and down-trodden ones and take away their lands. Of course, when a man's conscience is fully dead, he can acquire property by theft and robbery.

MONEY-LENDING AND BORROWING

The villagers are poor, but not all of them. If men borrow, there must needs be lenders, and so there are in Mohana. Generally the low-caste people are the borrowers, and the high-caste people, the lenders, but this is not the hard and fast rule. The rate of interest is 3 nP per rupee per month.

WEAPONS OF OFFENCE AND DEFENCE

The following weapons of defence and also of offence are found with the villagers: *lathi*, *dhanui* and *teer* (bow and arrow), *ballam*, *kanta*, *pharsa* and pistol.

Lathi. The *lathi* is a very common and cheap weapon, and is considered to be very necessary for every man. No villager will go out of his house at night, or out of the village even during the

day, without a *lathi*. It is both defensive and offensive. In a quarrel or riot or any disturbance, the *lathi* is the only weapon which is handy. A *lathi* is made of solid bamboo. A strong and more or less straight stick of bamboo is taken. All the leaves and offshoots are removed. A little oil is rubbed on the bamboo and slightly heated and it is straightened. Generally a *lathi* is not more than five feet in length. *Lathis* are either made at home or purchased from someone else. Some *lathis* have iron rings fixed at one end, and are very effective for purposes of attack. This type is called the *bandi lathi*. The *lathi* is used by itself, and also as a shaft for the *ballam*, *kanta* and *pharsa*.

Dhanui and teer. The *dhanui* is made from a special type of bamboo, and the string is of *tant* (from veins of dead animals). The *dhanui* is frequently oiled to keep the bamboo elastic. The *teer* is made of *setha* (reed) and is three feet long. An arrow-head of iron is fixed at one end. Sometimes the tip of the arrow-head is dipped in poison. Eagle feathers are fixed to the other end of the shaft to give flight to the *teer*. A *teer* costs about five rupees. Only very few villagers, say four or five, have a *dhanui* and *teer*.

Ballam. This is a sort of spearhead used by being fixed to a *lathi*. It is eight or nine inches long and has a pointed end. The breadth is two or three inches, and the sides are hammered down, so that the middle portion is thicker than the sides. Good *ballams* are made of hard iron and are costly. Five or six villagers who have a *ballam* each have it only in soft iron. The village *chowkidar* has one which he got from the police for protection.

Pharsa. The *pharsa* is a curved iron weapon, with a sharp convex edge. .This is also fixed on a *lathi* for use.

Kanta. The *kanta* is similar to the *pharsa* in shape, but bigger in size. This also has to be fixed on a *lathi*.

Karauli. The *karauli* is a dagger, and there is one in the village. It belongs to Raghubir Singh, who is a veteran fighter.

Pistol. Only Yodh Singh has a pistol, and he once used it to threaten the Ahir of Balapur, when he had a quarrel with them.

Several villagers who served in the army know the use of other arms and weapons but do not possess them.

CLOTHES OF THE DIFFERENT CASTES

Caste and economic reasons underlie the differences between the standards of living of the higher castes and the lower castes. Formerly it was due to caste distinctions, for the *praja* has to do just what their masters tell them, but now the higher castes have lost much of their power, and if the lower castes do not put on good clothes or eat good food, it is more because their pockets do not allow it. This statement however does not mean that caste distinctions have been completely effaced. Economic status and social status together set the standards of living for the different groups. Again no hard-and-fast line can be drawn to distinguish the dress habits of the groups and only a general idea of it can be given. The occupation of a person also decides his dress.

Thakur and Brahmin. They use the loin cloth, underwear, *dhoti*, *lungi*, pyjamas, pants, *banyan*, shirt with three pockets, one in front and two at the side—most of them wear half-sleeved shirts—*kurta* with side pockets, coat, sweater, *salooka* (half-sleeved garment with front opening and no collar), *dagula* (a cotton stuffed *salooka* type of garment worn in winter), cap, *angochha*, muffler and socks (worn by a few on special occasions). Only a few of the Thakur, viz., Indra Pal, Gayabaksh Singh and Gajadhar Singh, and the Brahmin S. P. Shukla wear pants. Gajadhar Singh was given a pair of trousers by a social investigator from Lucknow whom he served, while the others were in the Indian army during the last war. Raghubir Singh and Jaskaran Singh also served in the army, and have pants, but they do not wear them. Thakur Sumer Singh is a peon in the Lucknow High Court, and he wears trousers, for that is his uniform.

All the above-mentioned articles of clothing, except trousers, and pyjamas, are used by the other castes as well. But Chotan Ahir who works in Lucknow and Gajadhar Nai who worked under E., the American scholar, wear trousers, and pyjamas. Gajadhar Nai's youngest brother Ram Bhajan uses pyjamas. The only Kurmi of Mohana uses only the loin cloth, *lungi* and *kurta*. Socks and shoes are used by the higher castes on special occasions. Though all the articles of clothing used by the higher castes are used by the lower castes also, it is seen that the latter do not use as

many clothes as the former do. Even in winter some of the lower caste people wear very few clothes. Again there is a difference in the quality of the clothes worn. The clothes of a Thakur or a Brahmin are not as dirty or worn out as those of a Pasi or Chamar. Further among the lower castes the general wear is *salooka* and *lungi*, in place of the shirt or *kurta* and *dhoti* of the higher castes.

Women's clothes. Previously the women of the village used to wear only *lahngas* (full pleated skirts with a broad border at the lower end)—sometimes a *lahnga* is made out of 20 yards of cloth—*dupattas* and *kurtas*. Very rarely one wore a *dhoti*, but nowadays no high caste woman wears *lahngas* or *dupattas*. These have been replaced by *dhotis* and *jumpers*. Articles of clothing used by modern girls in cities have also found their way to the village, and are used by the higher caste women. But they are not used by the lower caste women, most of whom still wear *lahngas* and *dupattas* and others *dhotis* and blouses.

Thakur and Brahmin women generally have ornaments of gold and silver, while the lower caste women have them in brass or copper and nickel. Gold is never seen on the person of a low-caste woman, and even silver ornaments are rarely seen on her. Glass bangles are not used because they are easily breakable, and mean more expense in the long run. Ornaments used by the lower caste women are *jhumka* and *karanphool* on the ears; *hansli* and *gulooband* round the neck; *pahunchi*, *banboonta*, *taria* on the arms and hands; and *kara* on the ankles.

8. The Family

THE VILLAGERS distinguish between good and bad families. A family, to be good, should meet the following two requirements:

1. There should be no scandal or blot attached to the name of the family for at least three or four generations. A family loses its reputation when any one of its members has had illegal sexual relations or has had a hand in theft, dacoity, murder, etc. Unfortunately there are only a few people who can honestly claim to be free from such blots.
2. The second requirement is that the family should lead a cooperative life and not seek a separation. In the opinion of the villagers a joint family means progress and prosperity. Though the joint family is thus extolled, the general family pattern in the village is of the nuclear type.

Joint family. Mutual respect and good behaviour unimpaired by the quarrels of the womenfolk are the requisites of a joint family. The family of a man (we shall call him A for the sake of convenience) usually consists of (a) A, (b) A's wife, (c) A's parents, (d) A's brothers, their wives and children, (e) A's sons and their wives, (f) A's sons' sons and their wives.

In this village, families of this type are rarely found. Among the Thakurs there is only one family which has a large number of members, and that is the family of Nath Singh.

The members of this family are:

1. Nath Singh
2. Wife of Nath Singh
3. Indra Singh and Ram Singh, sons of Nath
4. Wives of Indra Singh and Ram Singh
5. Sons of Ram Singh
6. Sons of Indra Singh

7. Wife of Naresh Singh, the eldest son of Indra Singh
8. Wife of Harakh Singh, the eldest son of Ram Singh

All of them live together amicably and recognise one man (1) as the head of the family.

The process of separation. Evil-minded as Man is, it is very difficult for him to live up to the high ideals of the joint family system, and so the joint family splits up. The average family in the village is not very large and has only four or five members. Often a family splits up after the death of the father, when the brothers seek separation and division of property, but cases of separation between fathers and sons are not absent.

The villagers as a whole strongly accuse women of causing the break-up of families, and they are justified in their condemnation. Many a man leaves his parents and settles down in a separate house as soon as he is married, or at the latest within two or three years of his marriage. This is an almost universal feature of family organisation in the village. The men are instigated by the womenfolk to ask for a division of property. They are constantly nagged by their wives to get away from the rest of the family. In 99 cases out of 100, separation from the joint family was brought about by women. The women of the family always quarrel. The quarrels may not be of a serious nature, but the constant bickerings make life unpleasant. Quarrels are often due to very trivial causes such as a woman giving more food to her children than to the other children in the family. The other women look upon such partiality with indignation and the result is a quarrel. Finally these quarrels get on the nerves of the menfolk and force a separation.

The following are a few cases of separation of families.

1. *Madan Singh, Nath Singh, Raj Singh and Baran Singh* (*all sons of Charan Singh*). Baran said that even during the time of their father, Madan the eldest wanted to be independent. The reason was that Madan was lazy and would play no part in the various activities of the family, particularly those relating to agriculture. Being the eldest son he was expected to share the father's responsibilities but he was not willing to do so. So the father allowed him to separate from the family and lead an

independent life. The other three brothers lived together with their father and even after the father's death they lived under one roof for 12 years. Then came the quarrels of the women and the men were forced to seek separation. Even though they live separately, their property is not divided and so agriculture is carried on jointly.

2. *Deo Singh and Mardo Singh.* These two brothers separated during the lifetime of their father, and again the separation was due to the quarrels of the women of the family. Deo Singh had more children than his brother. Mardo's wife felt that the whole family was put to great expense because of Deo's children. One day as usual the two women quarrelled over something and Mardo's wife told the other that if she ate food in the house she (Mardo's wife) would eat her son. Deo's wife took these words to heart and left the house. She lived in a *hata* (an open space fenced off for cattle). The father of Deo and Mardo tried to bring about an amicable settlement, but failed. Food was sent to the *hata* for Deo's wife. For two years Mardo lived with his father and brother, but finally he had to leave the paternal home and live with his wife.

3. *Potan Ahir and Din Ahir.* The two brothers were living contentedly with their widowed mother. Last year Potan Ahir married, and the peace of the home was disturbed. The mother-in-law and the young daughter-in-law could not get on together. So Potan Ahir went to live separately with his wife.

4. *Choran Chamar and Dekhai Chamar.* Choran and Dekhai lived together very happily, but this happiness did not last long, for their wives began to quarrel and robbed the family of its peace. The brothers were forced to separate and they lived apart till the wife of Choran died. Then they came together again.

THE HEAD OF THE FAMILY

As a rule the eldest male is the head of the family and is in charge of its various activities. He is the sole authority in all the family's matters. The family takes its name after the head, as for example Nath's family or Kishan Nath's family. The family lands are recorded in his name. There are a few families in which the head is only nominal and the women rule in the house. This is so,

e.g., in the families of Bux Singh and Onkar Singh. The villagers opine that families in which the husbands are hen-pecked are no good.

HUSBAND-WIFE RELATIONSHIP

Customarily the husband is regarded as superior to the wife. This does not in any way impair the status of the wife, for to her is given the name 'little Laxmi', which means the goddess of fortune. Hence the wife is looked upon as the goddess of the home and as such she is to be treated with love and respect. The wife on her part should honour her husband. In short the home is to be built on the strong foundation of mutual respect and love between husband and wife, but needless to say in reality this lofty ideal is rarely attained.

Neither the husband nor the wife calls the other by name. The mode of address is *Oh, Eh, Arey* or father or mother of so-and-so.

When we discussed their husbands with the women, they never opened out, and any question regarding their future, they would avoid answering, saying that they did not know, or we should ask their husbands. We would not use such terms as superior or inferior status, as submission to husband's will is not devoid of respect. Chamar women work as wage labourers quite often, but they seldom give their earnings to their husbands. This is contrary to the accepted custom and canons of social behaviour. It is true that some men cannot provide for the needs of their wives and so the women go out to work in other's fields or houses, but this according to the villagers does not justify their keeping all their earnings to themselves. Chamar women go against the accepted domestic rules in another way too, for they sometimes eat their food before their husbands have eaten theirs, whereas among the other castes women generally partake of their food only after the husbands have finished their meal.

PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP

Relations between parents and children are cordial, particularly when the children are young. The father, generally, is very demonstrative of his affection for the children. Sons are allowed

to eat food with their fathers. Often fathers are very lenient to their sons and do not check bad habits such as smoking, gambling and using vulgar language. The eldest son's opinions on the family's affairs are given due consideration. The father is more attached to the sons, and the mother to the daughters. This is because work in the fields brings fathers and sons together, and work in the home establishes a strong bond between mothers and daughters. However, when the sons grow up, it is not unusual to see them quarrelling with their fathers. It is common in Thakur families.

MOTHER-IN-LAW DAUGHTER-IN-LAW RELATIONSHIP

When a daughter-in-law enters her new home, everything goes well for a while, and then generally there is trouble. In the beginning, every morning the daughter-in-law touches the feet of her mother-in-law as a sign of respect. This custom is gradually being given up as the days pass.

Daughters-in-law rarely win the affections of their mothers-in-law. Both of them try to take the upper hand in the management of the family's affairs. The mother-in-law with the advantage that age and experience give her tries to dominate over the daughter-in-law, but the latter often refuses to be submissive, and then begin the interminable family quarrels.

FATHER-IN-LAW DAUGHTER-IN-LAW RELATIONSHIP

A man and his daughter-in-law generally avoid meeting each other. The woman never openly shows her face to her father-in-law, and behaves with the utmost deference in his presence. Still there have been cases of illegal intimacy between fathers-in-law and daughters-in-law.

GRANDPARENTS-GRANDCHILDREN RELATIONSHIP

Grandparents love their grandchildren more than they do their

own children. They pet them and to a certain extent spoil them by lavishing too much affection on them. This affection decreases as the children grow older.

SOME KINSHIP TERMS USED IN THE VILLAGE

	Relationship	*Kinship terms*
1.	Father	*Dada, Bappa* or *Dana*
2.	Father's father	*Baba*
3.	Father's brother	*Kaka,* or *Chacha*
4.	Father's brother's wife	*Kaki* or *Chachi*
5.	Father's mother	*Dadi*
6.	Father's sister	*Phoophu*
7.	Mother	*Bua* or *Amma*
8.	Mother's brother	*Mama*
9.	Mother's father	*Nana*
10.	Mother's mother	*Nani*
11.	Mother's sister	*Mausi*
12.	Elder brother	*Bhaiya*
13.	Elder brother's wife	*Bhabhi*
14.	Elder sister	*Didia*
15.	Husband's brother	*Devar*
16.	Husband's sister	*Nanad*
17.	Brother's daughter	*Bhatiji*

MARRIAGE CODE

The villagers as a whole practise territorial and *gotra* exogamy, but they will not marry outside their caste, so that when a man wishes to get his son or daughter married, he must look out for a bride or groom outside Mohana, belonging to his caste, yet not to the same *gotra*. Even outside the *gotra*, marriage between two first cousins is not permissible. Among the Brahmin and Thakur, a man may not marry even a daughter of either his father's or mother's cousins. Most of the Thakur of Mohana are Chauhan, and marriage between a Chauhan boy and a Chauhan girl is tabooed. Chauhan must marry among other Thakur sub-castes of an equal

status. There are of course several exceptions to these marital codes. Bux Singh has married both his daughters to two Thakurs living in Mohana, who belong to a lower sub-caste than himself. The Ahir of the village are not very particular about maintaining *gotra* exogamy. Among the Brahmin, besides *gotras* there are other sub-caste divisions known as *biswas*. A Brahmin of 20 *biswa* is of the highest status. There are Brahmin of 18 *biswa*, 16 *biswa*, 14 *biswa* and so on. In a Brahmin marriage the boy always belongs to a higher *biswa* than the girl. Din Shukla is a 20 *biswa* Brahmin. His son is married to a girl from a family of 18 *biswa*.

THE MARRIAGE FIELD

The extent of the marriage field varies in different castes. The Thakur of Mohana usually marry in Partabgarh, Sultanpur, Gonda and Rai Bareli districts. Thakur boys marry girls who live as far as 100 miles away from Mohana, but in choosing grooms for their daughters, the Thakur like to make the selection in places within a radius of 20 miles. The Brahmin marriage field is very extensive, but Shukla's son is married to a girl from Amausi (in Lucknow district) about 19 miles away, and his daughter is married in Barabanki District. Though Ahir go as far as 30 miles to find parties, they generally try to marry in Lucknow district itself. Among the Kalwars, marriages are arranged between those living within a distance of 30 miles, but those who can afford it go farther. Among Lohar, the marital area is confined to a radius of 30 miles, among Barhai 20 miles, among Dhobi 25 miles, among Kumhar 20 miles, among Pasi 18 miles and Chamar 15 miles. The Pasi usually marry in Lucknow, Nawabganj and Sitapur. Due to economic reasons, most of the villagers try to fix marriages in places close to Mohana.

In arranging marriages, the eldest male member of the family, who may be the grandfather, father or uncle of the boy or girl has an important part to play. In the absence of grandfather, father or uncle the eldest brother takes on this important role. A middle man who may be a friend or a relative of both the families starts the marriage negotiations. If the negotiations prove favour-

able, elderly male members of the girl's family visit the boy's house for final settlement.

CHILD CARE AND TRAINING

As soon as a child is born, he is washed in warm water, fed on goat's or cow's milk (preferably the former) and put to sleep. For five or six days he is fed on goat's or cow's milk and only then is he fed at the mother's breast. The infant is fed as often as he cries. For the first one month or so, the child does nothing but take his milk and go to sleep. When he is about 8 months old he is given cereal food in addition to milk, and the child continues to take milk till he is three years old. Even in the case of a breast-fed child, he is breast fed till he is two and a half or three years old, if the mother does not have another baby within this period. But among the poor people, because the mother is under-nourished she is unable to provide the required quantity of milk and so the child depends on either goat's milk or cow's milk. A breast-fed child is weaned at the age of two and a half or three, and this is not difficult because from the age of seven months or so he has been accustomed to taking other foods. But if a child persistently demands his mother's milk, the mother applies ground chillies or the juice of *neem* leaves on her nipples, so that when fed, the child turns his face away from the hot or bitter taste and thus gives up his craving for mother's milk.

After the age of two and a half or three years, children are not given any special food, but take only what is prepared for the other members of the family. In most cases they are not given milk either, but if in a family there are not many children, they can afford to give milk to the children. The children as well as adults have three meals a day—morning, midday, and night. The low caste people are undernourished and their children are seen with distended abdomens, indicating thereby that they are suffering from enlarged liver.

A child's attempts to walk or talk are not guided by the adults. Generally a child sits up when he is 6–9 months old and then he tries to crawl. At the end of one year he moves on all fours, very easily. When he is one and a half years old, he takes short, un-

steady steps, to the great delight of his parents and other adult members of the family. When he is two and a half years old he is able to walk well. In the case of a weak child he might take a longer time to do this. The villagers believe that girls sit up and move about at an earlier age than boys. The 'baby talk' of a child is another source of great joy and pride to the parents. At the age of one year he utters inarticulate sounds and by the end of three years he talks well. Even at the early age of two he is taught to utter salutations like *Jai Ramji ki*, *Namaste ji* and *Jai Hind* and also kinship terms. By the time the child is six years old he is expected to know the common salutations and kinship terms.

Till the child is about three years old he sleeps with the mother, that is if she does not have another baby by then. When the child is being weaned, he is encouraged to sleep with the other females in the family. Generally brothers and sisters sleep together till they are nine or ten years old. This is due to lack of accommodation and of cots. Till the age of 10 months, a child wets and soils his napkins, and after that age efforts are made to train the child to form clean habits in this matter, but too much pressure is not exerted. By the end of three years the child should have formed those habits and not wet or soil his clothes or bed, but if he continues to do so he is corrected by a mild thrashing or scolding or by being made fun of. But if after learning to walk the child has still not formed the good habits he is punished. A child is not carried about habitually. After the feed he is put to sleep or left to play with the other children of the family. Men do not generally carry children. Of course there are a few exceptions. The low caste women have to go out to work in the fields. They leave their children at home in some reliable hands and go to the fields, and go home now and then to feed the infants. But a mother does not go to work in the fields till the child is at least three or four months old.

At a very early age children get acquainted with ghosts and spirits. They believe all these stories and their minds are filled with fear. They dare not go near the places which are supposed to be haunted. But generally a child is not given any deep religious instructions and so he has no fear of divine punishment or abhorrence of sin. Parents feel that a child cannot understand such intricate

matters. Obedience is seldom forced on a child by threats of a spirit or a ghost coming to him if he does not obey. The awe and fear that a child has for his father and mother is enough to make him obedient. Only in extreme cases are punishments, such as depriving him of a meal, or tying him to a pillar, given. An obedient and studious child is not praised, and may be rewarded with good clothes, but this is not often. If a child desires to have something which the parents feel he should not have, they plainly tell him so, and whether the child cries or rolls on the ground to have his desire met, little notice is taken of him. He is left alone till he comes round by himself. Similarly he is left alone if he howls and screams when he is punished for some fault of his. It is interesting to note that the father, or for that matter any man in the family, has no say in the matter and manner of bringing up a girl. On the other hand, where a boy's behaviour or his education is concerned, all members of the family, men and women, show an interest in it. A girl is supposed to be a *devi* (goddess) and so to beat her or reprimand her even when necessary is considered a sin, and so the men shirk their responsibilities in this affair and lay them all on the shoulders of the women.

Correct behaviour is expected of a child only when he reaches the age of ten or eleven. Till then he is innocent and 'can do no wrong or sin'. However, in the case of a girl, restrictions are placed on her at the age of seven or eight, and she cannot play with boys, but must be in the company of women and grown-up girls. She does not go out of the house except when sent on an errand. She is taught at this early age to acquaint herself with the various household duties that a woman has to perform. By the time she is 12 she knows all household work. She may at times be given a lecture by an elderly female member of the family about the standard of morality and the behaviour that is expected of her. The early segregation of the sexes is carried on into adult life, with the result that the women do not participate in any functions or ceremonies jointly with men, except in a few religious ceremonies in which the presence of a man's wife is necessary. In the domestic training imparted to girls, they learn to cook only simple meals. Some of them do some sewing by hand and also some crude knitting. But they do not know embroidery. If there is no infant at home they

know nothing about child-care. Though a girl starts helping her mother with the household at the early age of seven or eight, she is not expected to be a good housewife till she is married and has at least one child. A girl is not expected to relieve her mother of all the household duties, for it is the elder women of the family who have to cook the food and bear all the responsibilities of the household. Daughters are looked upon as an unnecessary burden, because of their uneconomic value and the huge expenses which have to be borne at their marriages. Hence there is no great rejoicing at the birth of a girl. A boy is given more deference because when he works in the fields with his father, he is looked upon as an unpaid worker. Here also the son or sons do not fully relieve the father of his duties. The father works side by side with the sons, though he might choose some light work, and continues to work till he is too old and feeble.

A boy is usually married at about the age of 14, though there are cases of marriage even at an earlier age. Even though married, he is not considered quite grown up till he becomes a father. However, once he becomes an earning member, the father's hold on him is not strong. The son stays on in the family, because it is a joint family, but he does nearly what he likes. In all situations, the father lays before him the pros and cons, and the son is allowed to make the decision. The father is not sorry about loosening his hold, for it is the absence of a rigid control that enables a joint family to run smoothly. But generally the father and mother are respected, and the son, as far as possible, does not go against their wishes. A youth stands in greater awe of his mother than of his father, and even if his mother does not treat his wife properly, he does not intervene, except in cases of extreme ill-treatment.

About teaching manners or instilling good ideas into the children's minds, the village elders do not care in the least. They are utterly indifferent to the formation of their children's character. They do not take any trouble to make the child's character ideal and beneficial to the society. The lack of care on the part of the parents in moulding their children's character is evident from the fact that children of each and every caste learn to smoke *bidis* at the age of six or seven. This bad habit is not checked. So is the case with telling lies. There are very few children in the village who do not

utter falsehoods in the presence of their parents. In spite of it, one rarely finds a parent chiding or beating a child for this unseemly habit. At the most the child is criticised in the presence of elders, but this carries no reformative value.

The children of the village are wholly devoid of any artistic or constructive talents, at least they give no expression to these either in play or in earnest. But the children display a great acquisitive tendency. If a toy is lost by one child, and another finds it, the latter will seldom return it to the owner, and if found out will not hesitate to tell a lie that the toy belongs to him. The desire to possess is so great in the children that often they get into the habit of stealing. If an article is left unguarded for a few minutes, it will be stolen. Once an investigator left a copy file on his bicycle and went to talk to a man for five minutes. Within that short space of time some of the boys who were playing there stole the file. Similarly, articles like shirts, towels, pens and *chappals* have been stolen from the investigators by the village children.

Another bad habit among the village children is gambling, in which they indulge from the early age of seven or eight. They gamble in the presence of elders who never prohibit them from doing so. The adults admit that it is a bad habit but they overlook it saying that as children they gamble with two or three pice, but will give it up when they grow up, for then they will not get money. It is true that with a few exceptions, grown up boys do not indulge in gambling. Boys attending school at Bakshi-ka-Talab have not contracted this habit, though they admit that at one time or the other they have gambled in their younger days. There are some parents who disapprove of their children gambling. In such cases, it is not difficult for the children to gamble on the sly.

Sobriety in language is unknown to the children when they quarrel, and even when they play, they use abusive language. Even when talking to elders, they speak rudely. When a child is checked for any fault, there flows a torrent of filthy words from his mouth. Even when beaten, he will, while crying, use indecent words against the elder who beats him. Parents and elders do not give much thought to this. They let the children talk as they will. Good values of life are not impressed upon children and hence they do

not look upon lying and stealing as wrong. The filthy words that children utter they learn from the adults. Boys sit with elders and crack dirty jokes about their sisters, mothers and aunts. Even the sober-minded among the elders permit them to do so.

Parents are, to a great extent, responsible for the children's behaviour and conduct. This is especially seen in the influence that a father has over his sons. Mohan Singh is a man of upright character and his son Bhuwan has the same reputation. Similarly Bindra Singh is an honest and good-natured man and so is his son Naresh. But sometimes, it works out the other way too. There is Nath Singh, a man reputed among all for his good character, but his sons Jadhav and Dukhan do not hesitate to steal or utter a lie. This may be due to the fact that the village atmosphere is filled with such lapses.

QUARRELS

Brought up in this way the children grow up into men and women whose first thought is about themselves, and not of others. This selfishness makes family life often unpleasant, for the people have difficulty in adjusting to one another's way of life. No wonder then if joint families should break up. A few quarrels have been reported as causing the break-up of the joint family system. But quarrels are still there whether a joint family breaks up or not, or whether a family is big or small.

1. This quarrel between a father and his son was over a very trivial cause. Ram Singh purchased one and a half seers of meat, but told his father that he had bought only one seer. At lunch Ram got his *katora* (metal pot) brimful with meat. Karan, the father, who thought that only one seer was bought, became angry. He scolded Ram for taking about three-fourths of the meat prepared. Ram tried to pacify his father but did not disclose the quantity he had bought. He asked his father to take his lunch quietly, as there was enough meat. However Karan went on abusing his son relentlessly. He said that he was the head of the family, and due respect should have been given to him by offering him a larger share of the meat. Ram offered his *katora* to his father, who dashed it on the floor and kicked the *thal*. Filthy words were

accordingly he went out of the house and did not return till the anger of his brother's wife cooled down. He was very much hurt about the affair, especially because Chain and his wife were so much indebted to him. It appears that Chain's wife is jealous of Koli's wife, because the latter is from a rich family and often visits her parental home, while the former's parents never invite her to their place. So Chain's wife always tries to tease and annoy Koli's wife.
4. There is always trouble in the family of Shukla, the village Pandit, for his daughter-in-law is a veritable shrew, and his son takes his wife's side. Pandit Shukla's wife died. The daughter-in-law suspects Shukla of having a large sum of money hidden in some part of the house. She wants to drive him away from the house, so that she could get at the money. One instance will suffice to show the extent and nature of discord that reigns in the family.

One morning Pandit Shukla was about to open the door of a room in the house whereupon the daughter-in-law objected saying that he had no right to open the door. Shukla replied that it was his house, which he had built with his own money and that he could do whatever he pleased in his house. The daughter-in-law went away without saying anything. But as soon as Shukla went into the room to say his prayers, the daughter-in-law went in and gave him two or three severe blows on the head with a piece of iron. Shukla's son Prasad was at home at that time, but he did not do anything to help his father. Thus enraged and humiliated Shukla got up and getting hold of his daughter-in-law's hair brought her to the ground. At once Prasad rose from his seat and got his wife released from the clutches of his father. Shukla left the house and with tears related the incident to Baran Singh and other Thakur. When the Thakur questioned Prasad about it, he merely replied, 'Oh, my father and my wife are both half-mad.' None of the Thakur are willing to interfere in the quarrels of this family because they know what a quarrelsome woman Prasad's wife is.

Sometimes it so happens that family quarrels are instigated by a third party motivated by selfish interest. This is seen in the following incident.

The villagers practice territorial exogamy and do not get their sons or daughters married to anyone in the village. But there are exceptions to this rule, with considerable criticisms from others.

stayed for the night with a relative of his, Mewa Lal by name. Mewa Lal got a Muslim gentleman to help them. He also hired a car for the party. Lal stationed an informant near his wife's house. From him he got the information that his wife and her mother would be going to Ujariaon village the next day. The next morning the party lay in wait along the road to Ujariaon. As expected, at about 10 a.m. the two women were seen coming in a *tonga*. The Muslim stopped the *tonga* at the point of his country-made pistol, and dragging Lal's wife outside, they forcibly put her in the car. At this Lal's mother-in-law wept and touching Lal's feet pleaded with him to leave her daughter with her for a few more days. She asked him to come on the 10th and take his wife away on the 14th. Lal agreed, and he and his friends went back. The party went to Lucknow again on the 12th. It was arranged that their return journey should be in a *tonga* up to Daliganj, and from there in a bullock cart to the village. However, the plans had to be changed, because Lal's informant told them that the girl's maternal uncle had promised her mother to get the girl back from Lal at Daliganj, using force if necessary. So the party, taking the girl with them, returned to the village, by car up to Bhitauli and on foot the rest of the way to Mohana. Now the younger brother of Lal's wife is also staying with them.

3. Koli, Puran and Mahesh Chamar were the step-brothers of Chain Chamar. All of them lived together for some time, then Puran and Mahesh separated from the joint family. Koli stuck on to his step-brother, for the latter was badly in need of some help and would have been ruined if Koli too had left him. Koli spent a lot of money on medicines and then on a Muslim priest to treat Chain's son when he fell ill. Then he had contributed Rs. 1,200 towards the marriage of Chain's son, and incurred a heavy debt for this cause.

One day Chain Chamar beat his wife saying she did not do any work, but sat idling the whole day. In protest, she went on a hunger-strike and cursed Chain, Koli, Koli's wife and Koli's son. Koli would have put up with anything, but he could not bear to hear his son being cursed. He asked his brother's wife not to curse him, but she paid no heed. So Koli scolded her, but to no effect. The only thing that Koli could do was to leave that place, and

accordingly he went out of the house and did not return till the anger of his brother's wife cooled down. He was very much hurt about the affair, especially because Chain and his wife were so much indebted to him. It appears that Chain's wife is jealous of Koli's wife, because the latter is from a rich family and often visits her parental home, while the former's parents never invite her to their place. So Chain's wife always tries to tease and annoy Koli's wife.

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clothing, plus some cash, the amount of which is not fixed. The articles of clothing included in the *phaldan* are:

1. Seven yards of *malmal* (a fine variety of cloth) which is used for *jauna* (the dress worn by the groom at the time of marriage). On this cloth, the bride makes her palm-print in *peetha* (a paste made of rice flour, turmeric and water). The *jauna* is prepared in such a way that the palm-print falls at the back.
2. Seven yards of *malmal* of a superior kind. The cloth is used to make *pheta* (cloth tied round the waist) and *kandhavar* (cloth worn on the front) for the bridegroom.
3. Seven yards of cloth known as *pagri* (used as a turban). This is also for the groom.
4. A pair of *dhotis*.
5. A *lehnga* (garment used by women) and a *dupatta* (a piece of cloth worn over the *lehnga*).

On this occasion a *pooja* is performed for *Ganesh* and *Gauri* (Hindu god and goddess). After the *pooja*, the bride's brother applies *teeka* (a sign made by the thumb with turmeric paste) on the groom's forehead. Then the *thaal* is given to the groom, who touches it, meaning thereby that it has been accepted and it is kept by the groom's family. The *phaldan* ceremony is sometimes called half-marriage, because it marks the permanent settlement of the match. After this ceremony, both sides feel that the marriage has been finalised, though there are a few instances of marriages having been cancelled even after the *phaldan* ceremony, but such cases are rare. All the rituals of the *phaldan* ceremony are performed by the Pandit, who in return gets Rs. 2 or Rs. 2.50 and one *seedha*.

Marriage generally takes place within a month or so of the *phaldan* ceremony, but sometimes a longer period elapses before it does. A fortnight before the actual day of marriage, various ceremonies connected with it take place. The first of these ceremonies is known as *ghaan*. However, before this there is the *lagan* ceremony in which the groom's Pandit writes the *saait* (auspicious day and time) for various ceremonies on a paper. The paper on which the *saait* is written is known as *lagan*. Turmeric powder

hair and receives payment in cash varying from Rs. 1.25 to Rs. 2. Sometimes he is paid in kind.

The most gay and joyous of all ceremonies connected with the life of an individual is his or her marriage, and marriage in the village denotes not a single ceremony in which the man and the woman are joined together for life, but a series of ceremonies covering more than a year sometimes. Negotiations for the marriage are started by an agent or middle-man who is acquainted with both parties. Then the girl's father or an elderly male member from her family visits the boy in his house. If he likes the boy and finds the match suitable, he takes up the question of dowry and whether to invite *pai puji* or *barat.* (*Pai puji* means the marriage party from the bride's family. So if the *pai puji* is to be invited it means that the wedding will be held in the groom's house. Hence the term *pai puji* is also used to describe the wedding that takes place at the groom's house. *Barat* on the other hand means that the marriage party is from the groom's family, and if the *barat* is invited, the wedding takes place at the bride's residence. The marriage that takes place at the bride's house is also known as *barat.*) As soon as the amount of dowry and the questions of *pai puji* or *barat* are settled, the *chedna* ceremony is performed in which the girl's family gives some money, ranging from Rs. 10 to Rs. 100 to the boy's family, to finalise the match.

After *chedna* there is the *phaldan* ceremony. The interval between these two ceremonies is not fixed and it varies from a week to a year. But generally the *phaldan* takes place as soon as possible after the *chedna* ceremony. An auspicious day and time to suit both parties is selected. The *phaldan* ceremony is considered to be an important one by the groom's family, because in a *barat* wedding, this is the only ceremony performed at the boy's house. Therefore, generally, but not always, a feast is arranged for the *biradari* and friends on this occasion. The *phaldan* is taken from the bride's house to the groom's by a member of the girl's family, preferably the bride's brother, and the Pandit and a Nai. The *phaldan* consists of a big metal plate containing yellow rice (yellow is a very auspicious colour in marriage), one coconut, a few betel nuts, a piece of sandal wood, dry fruits and some articles of

clothing, plus some cash, the amount of which is not fixed. The articles of clothing included in the *phaldan* are:

1. Seven yards of *malmal* (a fine variety of cloth) which is used for *jauna* (the dress worn by the groom at the time of marriage). On this cloth, the bride makes her palm-print in *peetha* (a paste made of rice flour, turmeric and water). The *jauna* is prepared in such a way that the palm-print falls at the back.
2. Seven yards of *malmal* of a superior kind. The cloth is used to make *pheta* (cloth tied round the waist) and *kandhavar* (cloth worn on the front) for the bridegroom.
3. Seven yards of cloth known as *pagri* (used as a turban). This is also for the groom.
4. A pair of *dhotis*.
5. A *lehnga* (garment used by women) and a *dupatta* (a piece of cloth worn over the *lehnga*).

On this occasion a *pooja* is performed for *Ganesh* and *Gauri* (Hindu god and goddess). After the *pooja*, the bride's brother applies *teeka* (a sign made by the thumb with turmeric paste) on the groom's forehead. Then the *thaal* is given to the groom, who touches it, meaning thereby that it has been accepted and it is kept by the groom's family. The *phaldan* ceremony is sometimes called half-marriage, because it marks the permanent settlement of the match. After this ceremony, both sides feel that the marriage has been finalised, though there are a few instances of marriages having been cancelled even after the *phaldan* ceremony, but such cases are rare. All the rituals of the *phaldan* ceremony are performed by the Pandit, who in return gets Rs. 2 or Rs. 2.50 and one *seedha*.

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When this ceremony is over, the bride and groom are taken into a room where the bride's god or goddess is kept. Before the image of the deity is a lamp with two *bathis* (wicks). The bride unites the two wicks with two rupee coins. This ceremony is known as *bathi milana* and it denotes that the bride and the groom are united for ever.

Then the groom goes back to the *baithka.* The next day there is the ceremony of *bhat. Bhat* is rice, and the ceremony is so called because rice is served at the feast. Of the *biradari* only those who take *kachcha* food participate in the *bhat.* On this occasion presents are given to the groom's father and a few other relatives. The groom also receives presents. In the afternoon is the *neutin* ceremony in the *baithka,* when the Brahmin calls out the names of the forefathers of both the bride and the groom and invokes the departed souls to bless the couple. On the evening of the same day is the *kaleva* ceremony, for which the groom accompanied by the young boys among his relatives goes to the bride's house. At this ceremony sweets, one coconut and one *batwa* (bag) are given. This is known as the *barhar* ceremony, and again presents in cash are given to the groom.

The next day the *bidaii,* i.e. the parting of the bride from her parental home, takes place. For this the bridegroom does not go to the bride's house, but the bride is brought to the *baithka.* They all leave for the groom's house. As soon as they reach the groom's house, the bride is taken down, and the corners of the clothes of the groom and the bride are tied together while under the *mandap.* Then the two of them go into a room in which the *deotas* are kept. Once they are inside, the groom's sister shuts the door and opens it only when she receives her customary present from them. This ceremony is known as *parchan.*

In a *pai puji* wedding the ceremonies of *darvaja-ke-char, pai-puji* and *bhaveren* are performed at the groom's house.

Though the *bidaii* ceremony marks the bride's farewell to her

seven times on the cheeks of the groom. This whole ceremony is known as *janvas*. After this ceremony the *barat* (marriage party of the groom) leaves for the bride's place.

When the *barat* reaches the bride's house, crackers are fired to announce the approach of the marriage party. Then the girl's people go to receive the groom's party. The latter are stationed in a separate house known as *baithka*. After some time the party is entertained with light refreshments including *poori*, *kachauri*, *ladoo*, and *barfi* (all these are popular eatables). After refreshments the *panvari* (image of the family god, made of flour) is carried to the bride's house by the Nai. The band also accompanies the *panvari*.

Soon the invitation for the *darvaja-ke-char* ceremony is sent from the bride's house and all the *barat* go to take part in it. The groom sits at the doorway. The Pandits of both sides are present. An elderly member from each side is at hand to give the necessary money for the *pooja*. Near the door are two people carrying a metal jar each on their heads. After the *pooja*, the groom returns to the *baithka*. *Mirchwan* (sugar or jaggery syrup) is brought in those metal jars by the Nai of the bride's side who gets Re. 1 for it. All the *baratis* take the *mirchwan*. Then *pooris* are sent out and each of the *baratis* gets two of those.

At night the ornaments and *sarees* are sent to the bride through the Nai of the groom's family and the Nai is given Re. 1.

The groom is then invited to the bride's house for the *bhavar* ceremony. This is performed by the Pandit under the *mandap* at the bride's house. First *pair pooja*, that is, worshipping the feet of the bride and the groom, is performed by the bride's elder relatives, the lead being taken by the bride's father. He washes the feet of the bride and the groom with water in a big metal plate. The hand of the bride is then kept over the hand of the groom, and the Pandit recites some *slokas*. The father keeps some money on the hand of the bride and sprinkles a few grains of rice over it. This money is then collected in the metal plate in which the feet were washed. The relatives and others performing the *pair pooja* do it in the same way. Those who perform *pair pooja* fast the whole day. The money collected in this ceremony is known as the *pair pooja* money and is considered to belong to the groom.

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same distance of about a yard is maintained between every two men in the procession. This bath is more of a ritual nature, for soon afterwards the people go home and take their regular bath. The Pandit is paid Rs. 10 and the barber Rs. 5.

The one who broke the skull carries an iron knife with him for ten days. The belief is that the dead person's spirit would have a dislike towards the man who broke the skull and might injure him if possible, but luckily spirits are afraid of iron. After 10 days the spirit joins the ranks of the gods and becomes harmless. Till then the man must be careful. He should not sleep by himself, for the spirit might harm him. No one else should touch him for fear the spirit should attack that person. During these 10 days he goes to a particular tank with a barber, who on the first day ties two earthen pots to a tree close by. The one who performed *kapal kriya* takes his bath at the tank every morning and takes his meals under the tree. In the evening he does not bathe but washes his arms and feet. As he goes home after his last meal, he must not look back. In one of the earthen pots tied to the tree, some rice and water are left and covered with a plate. In the other there is a candle. These are provided for the spirit of the deceased, so that it can see clearly and take the food and water.

On the third day after death, the *teej* ceremony is observed, when the one who lit the pyre goes to the cremation ground with the Pandit and the Nai. There the ashes are collected in a pitcher and buried under a tree. The ashes are later taken to one of the holy places like Gaya, Prayag or Kashi when any of the castemen or relatives go there, and is immersed in a river. When the son returns home after burying the ashes, a feast is held for all the villagers.

At the *daswan* or tenth-day ceremony all the male members of the family of the deceased shave their heads, beards and moustaches. Then they take a bath, and only now are considered to be clean, that is, free from the pollution of death. This ceremony is guided by the Maha Brahman (the Brahmin who performs only death-rites). Early in the morning a *pooja* is performed and another, after all the shaving and bathing are over. The women also take a bath. After the second *pooja*, the one who broke the skull is believed to be out of the reach of the spirit. The Maha

barefoot and wear only cotton clothes (because they can be washed). In the funeral procession, people walk at a distance from one another, never within a yard. There is a belief that if in a funeral procession the feet of two people touch, there is the danger of death occurring in either of their families within three months. Women never join a funeral procession. Before the procession reaches the cremation ground, the body is rested twice on the way. When they reach the *taal*, the bier is placed on the ground. The closest male relatives, especially the sons, have their heads shaved. Seven or nine maunds of firewood are bought from contractors, and the pyre is arranged. For the pyre five thick sticks are cut from a mango tree close by. Four of these are used as pillars of the pyre. They are fixed in the ground, enclosing a rectangular space, on the two shorter sides of which are placed two sticks resting on the pillars. Ten long pieces of wood are arranged lengthwise. The fifth mango stick is placed at one end to represent a pillow. The position of the pyre is such that the head of the body is to the north and the feet point towards the south. (Yama, the god of death, is supposed to reside in the south.) The body is dipped in the *taal* and then laid on the pyre. Some *ghee* and *gur* are smeared on the lips of the corpse. The eldest or the youngest son lights the pyre, while Maha Brahmans chant *mantras*. Before lighting the pyre, the son takes a bath in the water of the *taal* filled in a pitcher and *karwa*. The son then takes some dried grass and goes round the pyre seven times, at the end of which the dry grass is set on fire, and with it he lights the four corners of the pyre. He should not blow on the cowdung cake, for that will bring bad luck. When the pyre is being lit the others turn their faces away, for it is inauspicious to see the lighting of the pyre. It is believed that as soon as the four corners of the pyre are lit, the wind blows in from all four directions and helps the fire to burn well. *Ghee*, sandalwood, *lac*, etc. are thrown into the fire.

When the body is burnt out, the one who lit the fire goes round the spot with a *lathi* to perform the *kapal kriya* (skull-breaking ceremony). On the seventh round he breaks the skull with the *lathi* and by doing this—it is believed—he helps the soul of the deceased to escape. When *kapal kriya* is over the people take their bath at the *taal*. If they go elsewhere for a bath the

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illegal sexual connections and indulgence in prostitution. Both men and women are to be blamed for this. The following represents the views of some thinking people of the village. 'In spite of the very important role that religion plays in the village, in spite of the existence of *panchayats* and respected leaders, in spite of family affection, and in spite of every good influence, many of the villagers fall into this moral degradation. With a wife and children at home, to love and protect whom is the husband's privilege and duty, he often loves another woman, or rather exhibits feelings of lust toward her, and the wife who by the tenderest bonds of nature should be devoted to her husband and children might offer herself to another man. If married men and women behave so it is not strange that unmarried boys and girls step into the same pitfalls throwing aside the affection of fathers and mothers, and the allegiance they owe to them, and allowing their homes—the nests in which they were nurtured—to be filled with unhappiness by their wilful, wanton ways of living!' Many such cases have been dealt with under different headings.

Prostitution is established, more or less, as a regular trade in the villages and in Lucknow. This is a snare into which many villagers fall. Often the men propose never more to visit these brothels but, alas, though the spirit is willing the flesh is weak, and they fall an easy victim to the wiles of the ill-famed women.

The prostitutes charge at a definite rate for each visit. Some of them charge Rs. 10 while there are others who are satisfied with even Re. 1. Generally the rate varies between Re. 1 and Rs. 10. Besides they have to be supplied with betel, liquor, cigarettes, etc. The quality of drinks varies in proportion to the personal charges. Those who cost Rs. 10 per visit go in for liquor, while those who charge only Re. 1 are satisfied with a quarter-rupee coin for milk. These prostitutes tend to fleece a customer in every possible way. There is the case of a man who spent Rs. 100 on a prostitute during one visit. People of all castes, high or low, indulge in prostitution.

Quarrels are not absent in these houses of ill-fame. Once, two groups visited two prostitutes living together. One group was headed by A-Singh of Mohana. The men and the prostitutes were fully drunk. As a result of some slight misunderstanding a quarrel broke out between the two groups, and the only weapons they had

to fight with were liquor bottles. In the heat of the fray A-Singh slipped out unnoticed, and informed the police of the brawl. The police came and arrested the other party, leaving A-Singh's group and the two prostitutes.

Once this same A-Singh was returning to Mohana from Unnao with his wife and children. When they reached Lucknow he asked his wife and children to proceed to the village and he himself stayed behind under the pretext of having some urgent work to do, but in reality to visit a prostitute in Chowk. He promised his wife to be home in the evening, but he stayed in Chowk for three days.

Indulgence in prostitution makes men faithless husbands and fathers, or perhaps it is faithlessness that prompts them to find cheap pleasure with prostitutes. Whatever it is, under such circumstances, one is not surprised to find that in many cases family ties are not strong, and family life instead of bringing happiness brings misery.

10. Religion

RELIGION VITAL IN RURAL LIFE. Modern atheistic tendencies not having touched the village very much, religion plays a tremendous part in the life of the villager. Though austere purity in thought, word and deed is not the ideal, numerous beliefs and ceremonies portray the villager as a devout man. The drab life of working, eating and sleeping is made gay by colourful festivals, singing of sacred songs and ringing of bells. Behind all this gaiety and revelry there is the simple heart of the villager offering sincere worship, whether it be to a god or to an inanimate tree which to him is sacred.

The villagers believe that the lives of human beings are ordered by various deities. A man's wealth or poverty, health or sickness, prosperity or adversity, everything depends on the vagaries of these divinities. The gods and goddesses worshipped in the village are Shivji also known as Shankerji, Bhooian Devi, Durga Devi, Seetla Maharani, Kali Devi, Sati Maharani, Hanumanji alias Mahabirji, Jagan Nathji and the sun-god. Shivji is worshipped by all the villagers irrespective of their caste, for any prosperity or happiness that comes to the village is due to the grace of Shivji. Bhooian Devi commands the respect of many in the village. Her powers are manifold. She breathed new life into a dead tree, and this is only one of the many wonders she can perform. If any evil is to befall the village Bhooian reveals it to one of the villagers in dreams. Bhooian, Durga Devi, Seetla Maharani and Kali Devi, all four are connected with diseases, and strongly disapprove (so the villagers believe) of modern preventive measures such as vaccination; small-pox particularly is the result of Seetla Maharani's rage. Worship of Sati Devi prevents inter-caste frictions and feuds. Jagan Nathji is a friend to all, high or low, rich or poor, alive or dead. Every disease can be cured by his grace, but unfortunately he resides only in Jagan Nath Puri. If water is offered to the sun-god, as he commences his daily round

of the sky, the day will be prosperous. Thus all these deities have their respective roles in shaping the vicissitudes in a man's life.

Besides worshipping these deities, the villagers regard the *peepal*, *bargad*, and *neem* trees and the *tulsi* plant as sacred. The cow is a sacred animal and is referred to as *gau mata* (cow mother). Its dung is not looked upon as dirt. Ten or twelve years back Chamars never used to carry manure to the fields of others, for they thought it was degrading, but now they do it and explain their change of attitude by saying that it is not degrading to carry the dung of *gau mata*. To extinguish fire by stamping it with the foot is a sin, for fire is holy and is worshipped. No ceremony is complete without fire.

Belief in spirits and unseen powers. A considerable number of the villagers, particularly the low-caste people, believe in the existence of spirits and ghosts. Incredible, but interesting stories are related of these spirits. There are both benign and malign spirits. According to them, there are many haunted spots in the village of which Rani Taal is the most dangerous. Rani Taal is one of the five village ponds and close to it are the burial and cremation grounds of the village. This pond is surrounded by mango groves and is believed to be the haunt of all the evil spirits of the village. Then there is *Garha*, a spot made cool and shady by tamarind and mango groves around it. Here lives a *churail* supposed to be the spirit of a low caste woman who died an untimely death. The belief in the village is that when a person dies prematurely, his or her soul never has peace. The soul of that person wanders here and there, harassing innocent people. Another *churail* lives in a *Bail* tree in an open space known as Pajaiyoa. She is taken to be the spirit of a Chamar woman whose dead body was found floating in the Bari Taal. There is no definite explanation of her death, but it is generally believed that she committed suicide. Yet another *churail* resides in the mango grove of Dr. M. Nobody knows whose spirit she is, but her existence is accepted by all. These three spirits attack only women and children who pass by the haunted places at night or late in the evening. The spirits do not differentiate between persons on caste or status basis. Whether of high caste or low caste, everyone is equal in their sight.

These spirits have an uniform treatment for their victims.

Whosoever comes under their influence behaves in a manner that is not human or ordinary. The woman under a spirit's influence jerks her body violently, talking incoherently and irrelevantly. Some people believe that such behaviour is impossible in a woman in her right senses, others think that some women adopt this sham and fake behaviour to get prominence in the village. Whenever a woman becomes the victim of one of these *churails*, a witch doctor is called in, and he usually succeeds in driving away the *churail* from the human body. Sometimes the spirit enters a woman through her stomach and upsets her constitution, sometimes it rides on her shoulders to tear her limbs from her body. One of the ways adopted by the witch doctors to dispel evil spirits is to offer the victim milk and sweets. It is believed that these things when consumed by the victim are actually eaten by the spirit. Sometimes the offerings are placed under the tree where the *churail* resides, in the hope that the *churail* would accept these offerings and leave the victim unharmed.

Apart from these lonely *churails*, there are the spirits of Thakur women, who visit their families off and on either to take revenge for some harm done to them or to help the younger women of the family. M. Singh's wife died at an early age. He married again, about eight years ago. His second wife gave birth to a dead child, and it went without notice, but when she had a second still-born child the villagers were suspicious. When the third child was also born dead, they were convinced that it was due to the jealousy of the first wife who died after a long illness. It did not take long for the villagers to believe that every time M. Singh's wife conceived, the spirit of her predecessor entered her body and killed the child. The next time she conceived, the village Pandit came and performed *havan*. The *Chamar Ojhas* (witch doctors) performed their magical rites, and the woman gave birth to a very healthy child.

B. Singh's mother's spirit is supposed to be restless, and the spirit's presence is felt by B. Singh's wife. Once or twice while grinding wheat she felt the pressure of the upper stone vanish and it moved with amazing facility. She suspected that there was some supernatural force behind it. When this happened again and again she concluded that it was her mother-in-law who helped

her move the grinding stone. She was watchful after that and found that her mother-in-law's spirit helped her in other household chores also. Sometimes work would get done without anybody doing it. To convince her fully she saw the apparition also and informed her husband about it. It is now the accepted belief that B. Singh's mother likes her daughter-in-law so much that she helps her in the household work. B. Singh's wife still feels the presence of this benign spirit.

The spirit of B. Singh's first wife is very exacting. Once she appeared to B. Singh's second wife who was filled with fear at the sight. She fell down unconscious and developed high fever. B. Singh offered milk to his first wife and a witch-doctor was called in who cured the second wife of her malady. Since then, on every festival a share of food cooked in the house is set apart in a room which is supposed to be the abode of the spirit. Further, whenever there is a marriage in the family, a set of women's clothes is left in the room. If these offerings are not made, the spirit makes her presence felt and trouble visits the family in the form of disease, quarrel, etc. Only B. Singh goes into the room.

A little girl seven years of age was playing outside her house, when suddenly she fell down unconscious and died. Her death is attributed to the action of a spirit, and since then that place is supposed to be haunted.

There are male members also in the ghost community, who choose their victims from among the men of the village. The ways adopted by the male ghosts are quite different from the ways of the female ghosts. For one thing, they attack their victims vigorously and leave them only after a strenuous struggle. One of the ghosts, however, appears to have a sense of humour and is content with misguiding travellers. This ghost of Nat Beer lives outside the village to the east. It never enters the village. Nat Beer's death was untimely, but so far back in the past that the present generation does not know the year of its happening. It is said that long ago a Nat (acrobat) went to a Thakur and asked his permission to catch a snake which he said was in the house of the Thakur. That particular snake was the family god of the Thakur and he refused permission, but gave in at the insistence of the Nat. However he warned the Nat that if anything untoward happened, he would

not be responsible for it. The Nat agreed and played on his *been* (a flute-like instrument). Many snakes came out, but not the one he wanted. After a long time that snake also came out. It appeared to be charmed and slowly proceeded towards the Nat. As it approached him, he threw his *been* on it, but instead of being charmed, it bit the Nat and glided away. The Nat shouted for aid, but before any help could reach him he died. His spirit is the oldest ghost in the village. It is never dangerous. It always attacks its victims in the night, and they never succeed in finding their way till morning. Several villagers have testified to the fact that under this spirit's influence they have lost their way and wandered here and there throughout the night. A very beneficent effect of the attack of Nat Beer is that his victims are safe from the attacks of other spirits, wild animals, thieves, dacoits, etc.

There is then the spirit of Maiku, quite a dangerous one. It once attacked a Thakur near a melon-field. The Thakur was very brave and resisted the spirit. They fought, they wrestled and they whipped each other till Maiku's uncle, hearing the Thakur abuse someone vehemently and seeing him fight some invisible being, rushed to help him. The ghost immediately fled. May be it did not recognise the second man as its uncle, or may be the uncle and nephew never got on well with each other.

On another occasion the ghost of Maiku chased N. B. near the Rani Taal. N.B. was going home in his *ekka*. As soon as he reached home he fell ill and after a few hours of vomiting and motions, he died. Before his death, however, he told his son that some invisible being had pursued him. After his death gossip-mongers passed round the story that N. B. had been attacked by Maiku's spirit, and the villagers accepted the story without any question.

When the spirits attack animals, the latter behave in a strange manner. N.'s buffalo stopped giving milk in one teat, just a few days after giving birth to a calf. N. tried some medicines but to no avail. After some time the flow of milk was stopped in the other teats also, and there was swelling in the udder. N. had to seek the help of a witch-doctor, who cured the animal for a fee of Rs. 1.25. The belief is that whenever cattle stray into graveyards or eat grass growing in haunted places, they are victimised by spirits. Whenever an animal dies and the cause of its death is unknown,

an easy solution is arrived at, by saying that a spirit killed it.

Often, when the villagers are under the spell of evil spirits, they worship Ganga Baba besides getting in touch with witch-doctors. Ganga Baba was a saintly and devout man. He suffered from no disease, and died with the name of *Ram* on his lips. Only once in his life did he utter a lie, and that was when his *guru* visited him during a famine. He had only peas at home and no money to buy anything else. So he sent his brother out to pawn a metal vessel. When the brother left the house with the vessel, the *guru* was in meditation. Nevertheless, he divined the man's going and the cause of his going. When he asked Ganga Baba about it the latter replied that he did not know the cause of his brother's going. The *guru* admonished him for telling a lie, and Ganga Baba called his brother back. The food prepared that day with peas alone was far more tasteful than any food that Ganga Baba had tasted before. After the meal, the *guru* blessed the family and said that it would never suffer for want of food. When Ganga Baba died he was cremated at Rani Taal. It is believed that his spirit protects the village from evil spirits. It is only due to the presence of this spirit that there are not many evil spirits in the village. Whenever there is an attack by some spirit the victim has only to pray for Ganga's mediation.

Once C. P. Singh fell ill with fever and inflammation of the throat, so that he could not speak. His father took him to Rani Taal, and laying him on the ground, prayed to Ganga Baba. The next morning, C. P. Singh was quite all right. Ganga Baba's demands are modest. He asks only for an offering of milk every morning from the milk-men. One day N. Singh forgot to make his daily offering to Ganga Baba before going to Lucknow to sell his milk. That day he met with an accident and lost all his milk.

Thus story after story can be added to show how deep-rooted is the villagers' belief in spirits and ghosts. Children in their tender ages are acquainted with these stories and warned not to go anywhere near the haunted spots.

RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

Dreams. When a person sees an unknown woman in his dreams

consecutively for a few days, it is believed that an evil spirit is following him. If one speaks in his dreams (this is called *kawana*), again it is attributed to an evil spirit. An army seen in a dream is taken to be a procession of ghosts and evil spirits. If one sees a Thakur or a Pasi in his dreams it is believed that god Bhooihar demands a *pooja* from him. Sometimes when a man is believed to be haunted by an evil spirit and is troubled by unlucky dreams, he and his relatives promise an offering to Bhooihar and when he is no longer troubled by evil dreams, the promised offering is made. To avoid inauspicious dreams people generally offer water to Bhooihar. If such dreams still occur in spite of this offering, the person concerned approaches an elderly villager or an *ojha*. If the dreams are very inauspicious he is asked to offer water at certain *deosthans* or give some other offering to Bhooihar. Also the *ojha* gives the victim of evil dreams an amulet, which is usually a clove wrapped in a small piece of cloth. In cases of highly inauspicious dreams, the victim is advised to make costlier offerings like goats and cocks. Further the *ojhas* perform *pooja* to neutralise the effects of inauspicious dreams. But such cases are rare.

Here is concrete evidence to show that the villagers' beliefs in dreams do not always hold good. In January 1955, an investigator (from the Department of Anthropology, Lucknow University), while in the village, dreamt of a *neem* tree and a few dogs. In the morning, he told the dream to a Thakur, who said that it was a very inauspicious dream. The same opinion was expressed by a village leader also, for according to him, to dream of a *neem* tree means that Sheetla Maharani (the goddess of epidemics) demands an offering, and dogs in dreams presage imminent death, for they are always associated with Yama, the god of death. The investigator was asked to offer a goat to Bhooihar to ward off the evil effects of the dream. No such offering was made, and no evil befell the investigator.

Dream experiences. Belief in dreams is no less deep-rooted. It is believed that dreams had after 4 a.m. are prophetic, foretelling either good or evil. Dreams may be classified as good and bad. To dream of monks, copper coins, a cow or a feeding calf denotes good luck. Dreaming of the image of a god means seeing the god himself. Fruit trees denote addition to the family. Dreams in

which elephants, buffaloes or dogs figure foretell the death of someone, for these animals are the carriers of Yama, the god of death. To dream of silver or gold means that a theft would be committed. A *neem* tree in dreams tells the dreamer that Bhagwati Maharani wants something. That 'something' is revealed by the interpreter of dreams. Any dreams which the villagers do not understand are taken to an oracle who claims to have revelation from God.

Auspicious moments, omens and superstitions. The villagers are very particular about auspicious days and moments. Whenever any important work is to be done, a journey undertaken, or a ceremony solemnised, the auspicious time for it is calculated by the village Pandit. Friday is considered a lucky day and *Chait* a lucky month. One is forbidden to travel towards the north on Thursdays and Wednesdays, towards the east on Mondays and Saturdays, towards the west on Sundays and Fridays, and towards the south on Thursdays. If any man is forced to travel on any of the forbidden days he must leave the village in the morning, before the cock crows, for then ill-luck would not befall him. It is considered good to take betel on Sundays, curds on Tuesdays, and *dhania* on Mondays and Fridays, the first thing in the morning after a bath.

Among highly superstitious people, omens, good and bad, are given much consideration. To sneeze before starting any work or setting out on a journey is bad. To see an empty pitcher is unlucky. If a jackal crosses a man's path, it denotes bad luck, but if the jackal turns back and looks at the man no harm will befall him. A jackal's howls heard from the east in the night predict death in the village. Also the cry at night of the bird *Nikuhi*, whom no one does see, presages death. The following couplet shows the danger of seeing a one-eyed man while on a journey:

Teen kose tak mile jo kana
Laute sahi so bara sayana

It means that whoever meets a one-eyed man within six miles and returns home safely must indeed be a man of supernatural powers.

A man who before commencing a piece of work sees a pitcher full of water or a washerman or a dead body will be prosperous in his work. The sight of a fish in a pond on the first rainy day in *Asarh* is considered good. If a man, on seeing a calf sucking milk, crushes mango-blossoms in his palms, he can never be harmed by a scorpion's bite.

When the whole scientific world is agog at the occurrence of a solar or a lunar eclipse, and scientists bring out intricate explanations for these, the villagers are equally excited but they have an interpretation of their own for these natural phenomena. The story is a delightful one and runs as follows.

Once upon a time all the gods came together to churn the ocean to get *amrita* (elixir) which has the quality of making man immortal. The demons also helped the gods in their search. Ashwini Kumar, the physician of the gods, entered the sea and came out with a pitcher of *amrita*, which immediately became a bone of contention between the gods and the demons, and led to a scuffle. Lord Vishnu, the supreme God, hit upon a brilliant idea to put an end to the quarrel and he came in the guise of an attractive young woman. The demons were so enamoured of her charms that they did not notice that she had taken hold of the pitcher and was distributing the *amrita* to the gods. One amongst them, however, was not under the spell of this beautiful woman. So he went to the ranks of the gods, disguised as one of them, and Vishnu, not knowing this, gave him a share of the immortalising drink. While he was gulping it down, two of the gods, *Surya* (sun) and *Chandra* (moon), noticed this outsider in their ranks and immediately brought the matter to the notice of Vishnu, who attacked him with his *Chakra* (disc, a weapon which is supposed to kill the person on whom it is released and then return to the thrower). Though the head of the demon was severed from his body, he did not die for he had taken the *amrita*. *Ketu* (the head) and *Rahu* (the body) have ever since chased the sun and the moon for reporting against him, and whenever they get a chance they try to devour the sun and the moon; but since the head and the body of the demon are separated the victims cannot be held for long. The sun and the moon are defended by their fellow-gods, while the demons lend a helping hand to their champion. Thus goes on the

immortal war between the two groups of immortals. When the demons are in supremacy and succeed in swallowing the sun or the moon, the solar or lunar eclipse occurs. The demons' victory naturally foretells calamity for the mortals. *Rahu* is the enemy of the moon, and *Ketu* of the sun.

RELIGIOUS HEROES AND MYTHS ABOUT DIVINITIES

Many other interesting stories are intertwined with the villager's religion and social problems. Sati Maharani is the goddess who brings peace and amity to the village. *Sati* is the custom in which a woman, at the death of her husband, jumps on the funeral pyre and allows the flames to devour her along with her husband's corpse. Sati Maharani's real name is not known, and her story dates far back to the days of Nawab Wajid Ali Shah. It is said that this Nawab who was the ruler of the neighbouring village Asti, once decided to attack Mohana. The residents of Mohana rose in a body forgetting all caste and creed distinctions and fought the Nawab. The Pandit of the village foretold his own death in the battle, and gave a fair promise to the villagers that they would be victorious in battle, if his corpse was taken to every battle-field. He also predicted that the spot where his body was laid finally would mark the future boundary of the village. The villagers tried their best to dissuade the Pandit from taking part in the battle. But his determination to fight could not be shaken, and his wife shared his opinion that he should defend the village. The story goes that the events of the battle shaped according to the Pandit's prediction. When the din of the battle ceased, his body was cremated near Asti. His wife rode the funeral pyre and wanted the villagers to light it. On their declining to do so, by her spiritual powers, she produced a fire and was consumed by the flame along with the body of her husband. Before committing *Sati*, she blessed the village with immunity from caste or communal dissensions. As the story travelled from mouth to mouth she commonly became known as Sati Maharani and is worshipped by the villagers. Her *chabutra* lies outside the confines of Mohana towards Asti.

A narrative with a touch of religion in it explains the origin of the bamboo tree. 'Long, long ago in the *Dwapar Yuga*, a king named Brahmanand ruled Kashi (Banaras). He had a beautiful daughter, Kamla, who, even when she was six, was an accomplished girl, almost precious. By the age of 12 she had mastered all the *Vidyas* (branches of knowledge). Brahmanand realised that it was time she was married, and sent men out far and wide to seek for a suitable match. About 200 miles away there ruled another king, who had the misfortune to have a one-eyed son, whom he was desperate to get married, for he knew the difficulty of getting a bride for him. This king now bribed Brahmanand's men with a handsome sum of money and arranged for Kamla to be his son's bride. On the first day of marriage, the groom's father replaced his son by a handsome young man to avoid a scene. (This young man was a disciple of Kapil Muni of Kashi. Kapil Muni had asked his disciples to go round a particular bird from the right side. This disciple was not one of those to be put off by failures and where the other disciples failed he succeeded. He chased the bird hither and thither till it tired and settled on a tree. He then circled it from the right side. Having succeeded in his pursuit, he returned, but it was night before he got back, and he slept in front of a shop in Kashi. The messengers of the groom's father found him and offered him Rs. 100 to impersonate the groom. He agreed, and the first day's ceremony took place with him as the officiating groom.) The next day the real groom attended the ceremony. The bride realised that it was a different man and objected to it. Under the wrathful eyes of Brahmanand, the men who had gone to arrange the match admitted the whole affair. The marriage party was chased away. Brahmanand now offered to marry his daughter to anyone who defeated her in a discussion on *shastrarth*. Many princes came and went away defeated by the girl but she was defeated at the hands of the person who had impersonated the groom. It was only then that the girl recognised him as the man she was really married to. After some time he wanted to take his wife to his native place and the king granted him permission. There were six attendants with them to carry the palanquin. On their way they stopped to drink water from a well. The sight of the well put wicked thoughts into the mind of the young man. He

dismissed the six attendants saying that he and his wife would travel by themselves. He stripped his wife of all her jewels, threw her into the well, and made away with the jewels. The girl however was rescued from the well by a passer-by soon after her husband had gone away and she returned to her father.

'A couple of years later, the husband after having squandered the ill-begotten wealth, went to the palace of Brahmanand, fortified with a concocted story of the disappearance of his wife, and with the hope of getting some more money from his father-in-law. But at the palace he was amazed to see his wife, who asked him to flee for his life or else he would be the victim of her father's wrath. He immediately took to his heels.

'The girl, who was a devotee of Krishna, decided to go on a pilgrimage. She set out with a few servants and reached Brindavan, the abode of Krishna. She sent away all the servants, and carving a big hole in a *peepul* tree sat inside it, praying to Krishna to set fire to the tree. The tree caught fire mysteriously and with it Kamla, the devotee of Krishna and the unfortunate wife of Kapil's disciple, was burned to death. Some time later a strange grove of trees was found in the place where the *peepul* tree had stood. Kamla had ardently prayed that she should always be with Krishna in her reincarnations. Krishna came along that way, saw the grove, cut out a twig and made it into a *bansuri* (flute). Thus was Kamla's wish fulfilled. Not only is the flute the constant companion of Krishna, it also often remains on his lips. From *bansuri* came the name of these new trees, *bans* meaning bamboo.'

Hard days have fallen upon most parts of the world, and the village Mohana also has had to bear its burden of poverty and hardship. The prices of foodstuffs have soared high. The villagers have seen better days, but now conditions look bleak and grim. The village elders are not concerned with the world at large, but they seem to know why Mohana has seen prosperity leave its shores. This is what they say. 'There was a saint, popularly known as Kamalia Baba, who lived under a tamarind tree in the north-western part of the village. The villagers used to send him a cart-load of grain daily. As time passed people felt it was a waste to send a cart-load of grain for Kamalia Baba. So they sent him only half a cart-load. By and by, the cart was disposed of, and the

offering was sent on a camel, then on a buffalo and finally on a horse. Kamalia Baba did not mind these, but when the villagers stopped sending anything at all, he lost his patience and cursed the villagers that with such pettiness they would never prosper. He also cursed the tamarind tree that it would bring forth blossoms, but no fruits. Since then the tamarind tree blossoms in the due season, but the flowers fade away without developing into fruits. Thus Kamalia Baba's curse has stricken Mohana with poverty.'

FESTIVALS—ORIGIN AND SIGNIFICANCE

Many a festival has its root in legend. For instance *Holi*, which is the most important festival for the people of Mohana, is celebrated in honour of Prahlad who triumphed over Holika, his wicked aunt. A long time ago, there lived Harnakush, a king and tyrant. At the height of his glory he claimed himself to be the Lord Almighty. But his subjects worshipped Ram. Therefore Harnakush proclaimed throughout the length and breadth of his kingdom that he alone was God, and that none should worship Ram or utter his name. He further warned that breach of the rule would be punished with death by hanging.

One day Prahlad, the son of Harnakush, saw two puppies emerge from an oven. He could not understand how the puppies could have survived the tremendous heat of the oven. He asked his *guru* about it, who told him that it was due to the power of Ram, and that none could understand it or question it. He also told Prahlad not to mention Ram's name, for his father would kill him. But Prahlad was not the one to yield to such threats. Once the seed of faith was cast in his mind it took deep root, and he became an ardent worshipper of Ram. When Harnakush heard that his own son disregarded his orders, he was filled with great anger. He tried his best to bring his son round to obey him, but the son was adamant in his faith and worship. When all threats failed, Harnakush ordered that his son should be killed. Accordingly Prahlad was thrown down a hill, but he stood unhurt. Poisonous snakes were let loose on him, but their bites could not summon the messenger of death to bear away the spirit of Prahlad. He was chopped with swords, but to no avail. Along came Holika, the sister

of Harnakush, who took upon herself the responsibility of killing Prahlad. She ordered a pyre to be arranged and sat on it with Prahlad in her lap, fully confident that her nephew would meet his death. The pyre was lit, and when the fire died down, Holika was found burnt, but Prahlad stood up alive uttering the name of Ram.

This is the myth of origin of the *Holi* festival which is named after Holika, and, therefore on *Holi* day a fire is lit to commemorate the death of Holika.

But now to continue the story of Prahlad, he was ordered by his father to embrace a red-hot metal pillar. But the heat of the pillar was assuaged by the heat of Prahlad's spirital fervour, for when he touched it, he found it very cool. Prahlad would have had to go through many other ordeals, but Ram could not tolerate any more atrocities upon his devotee, and he emerged from the pillar in the form of *Nar-Singh Avatar.* He killed Harnakush with his nails and sucked his blood, but embraced and kissed Prahlad.

Dusserah, another great festival, also has a historical explanation. This festival marks the triumph of Ram over Ravana, the demon king of Lanka, who carried away Sita, the wife of Ram. Close on the heels of *Dusserah* follows *Dewali*, which signifies the vigorous enthusiasm with which Ram was welcomed to Ayodhya, his capital, for it was his return not merely from the victorious battle with Ravana, but from 14 years of exile.

The birth of Lord Krishna must needs be celebrated with great enthusiasm and spirit, for he brought about the death of the cruel king Kans. Kans, the ruler of Mathura, was told by an oracle that he would die at the hands of the eighth child of his sister Devaki. To eliminate such a danger for ever, Kans decided to kill the eighth child as soon as it was born. Even before Devaki brought forth her first child she and her husband Vasudeva were imprisoned by orders of King Kans. When the first child was born, Kans thought of allowing it to live, as his enemy was the eighth one, and he wished to spare all other children. But Narad Muni wanted to increase Kans' sins—which would bring about his early destruction—and he persuaded the king to destroy all the children of Devaki. To justify their murder the Muni brought a lotus with eight petals and asked Kans to point out the first

or the last petal. Kans examined the petals but could not fix the first and the last. Narad told Kans that similarly any child of Devaki could kill him and the king ordered each new-born child of his sister to be killed. The servants carried out the order with alacrity and the first seven children shared this fate. The eighth child was God incarnate Himself. It is said that the moment He entered the world, the prison guards went to sleep, the iron fetters of Vasudeva (Devaki's husband) fell off and Vasudeva, wanting to save at least one son, took him out of the prison and exchanged him with the newly-born daughter of Nand, the ruler of Gokul, as arranged beforehand. The moment Vasudeva re-entered the prison with the daughter of Nand, the prison guards awoke, and the fetters and shackles re-locked themselves automatically on the hands and feet of Vasudeva. The guards, hearing the cries of the child, informed the King, who rushed to the prison and snatched the child from the arms of the weeping Devaki. Devaki remonstrated against the inhuman behaviour of her brother, but Kans without paying any heed to her pleadings, smashed the child on the stone wall of the prison. Later, Krishna, who was brought up by Nand, killed Kans and thus ended the reign of the cruel king. The birth of Lord Krishna is celebrated annually in the festival of *Janmashtmi.*

RITUALS

Before we go on to a description of the large number of rituals and festivals, it would be worth our while to know something of the sacred spots and places of worship in the village.

In the south-western part of the village, in the locality known as Kothar, stands a *pakka* temple of Shivji. It was built 25 years ago by a *sadhu* of Ayodhya (a sacred place in U.P.), who was cured by Dr. M. In return for his services, Dr. M. asked the *sadhu* to build the *Shivala*, and the *sadhu* agreed. The temple is situated on a platform six or seven feet high, and hence to enter the temple one climbs a staircase which lands one before the main entrance facing east. In the middle of the temple is seen the image of Shivji and close by is the image of a bull known as Nandesur. It is believed that Shivji uses the bull for conveyance,

so the image of Shiv is always accompanied by that of a bull.

The main part of the temple has a beautiful canopy over it. From the middle of the roof hangs a big bell on a long chain. This bell is rung at the time of worship. At the top of the dome is an iron bar, with three spikes. This is known as *Trisul* and is the staff of Shiv. Close to the temple is a *pakka* well.

This is the only temple in the village but there are other places of worship known as *deothans*. The word *deothan* is a corruption of the word *devasthan* which means 'the residence of a deity' (*Dev* means deity, and *sthan* means place). The *deothans* are under trees and are represented by *chabutras* (platforms) on which are placed images or sometimes stones to symbolise the particular deity.

There is a *deothan* of Bhooian under a *peepul* tree in the Chamaran Tola. Some of the villagers say that Bhooian is a god by name Bhooiar Deota, but others say that it is a goddess known as Lalpur Devi. Since the deity is known as Bhooian by most of the villagers, it may be inferred that Bhooian is a goddess. Bhooian's *deothan*, circular in shape, runs round the tree and is three feet high from ground level. This *chabutra* is made of bricks, and a few stones are placed on it. The *deothan* of Durga Devi is under a *neem* tree, and that of Seetla Maharani under a *pakaria* tree.

There is a *deothan* under another *pakaria* tree shared by Kali Devi and Shivji. On it is an image of Kali Devi brought from Lalpur (a village about a mile to the south-west of Mohana) about 80 or 90 years ago. The story goes that an Ahir brought it, and kept it at his house for worship. But one night Kali Devi appeared to him in a dream and warned him that unless her image was removed from his house he would suffer a great loss. The Ahir told his dream to the villagers and a Thakur agreed to accept the image from him ceremonially. The image was given to the Thakur who placed it under the *pakaria* tree. Later some people kept a few stones on the *deothan* to represent Shiv, and it became a combined *deothan* of Kali Devi and Shivji.

Besides the above-mentioned *deothan* which he shares with Kali Devi, Shivji has four other *deothans* all to himself. They are situated in different parts of the village. Then, of course, there is the *deothan*, already mentioned, of Sati Maharani in the north-eastern part of the village.

Anyone who wishes to worship Shiv in the *Shivala* has his bath at the nearby well, he cleans his *lota* (metal jug) and fills it with water. He also takes with him a few yellow oleander flowers. Barefooted, he enters the temple in all humility and offers Shiv the water and the flowers. Then he bows his head, touches the image and applies water on his forehead. While offering water he does *astuti* (reciting some *slokas* or phrases in praise of the god or simply saying *Jai Shankerji*). The bell is then rung.

The village Pandit performs *arti*, both morning and evening. Every Tuesday a little of jaggery is distributed as *prasad* to all present. Large numbers of people come to get *prasad*, but only a few come to worship.

Low-caste people are not allowed to enter the temple. If they wish to offer water to Shiv, they must do it outside the temple. Formerly, the low-caste people were not allowed to cross even into the temple compound.

Though Hanumanji commands the reverence and worship of many in Mohana, there is no temple to him in the village, but there is one in Aliganj, Lucknow, where villagers go to worship him. Some of the neighbouring villages have temples of Hanumanji and the people of Mohana go to these villages also. *Mangal* (Tuesday) is the day of Hanuman, and on Tuesdays his devotees go to his temple and offer *prasad*. Of course it will not be possible for all of them to go on every Tuesday, and so one person may go in the name of his family. The *Mangals* of *Jeth* (May-June) are considered very important days, so almost all people try their best to offer *prasad* to Mahabirji on one of the four Tuesdays of this month. Those who wish to celebrate a *Mangal* in the village fast the whole day. During the day, *agiari* is performed in the name of Mahabirji. At night musicians are invited to sing *bhajans* and the *prasad* distributed generally includes the following:

1. *Gur dhania* (jaggery plus roasted wheat). This is considered an essential item.
2. *Lai* (roasted paddy).
3. *Ladoo* (sweet balls).
4. *Batasha* (sugar bubbles).

In general, only one *Mangal* every month is celebrated. The celebration, however, is waived in the month of *Kuar* during the fortnight of the ancestors (*pitar-paksha*); for, in this fortnight, only ancestors are worshipped and fed.

No caste restrictions are observed in the worship of the sun, but for the Brahmin it is a primary duty. However, now since these high-caste people have lost most of their rights and privileges they do not strictly adhere to the religious codes.

Some people offer water to the sun after their morning bath, and some do it after worshipping Shiv in his temple. But *Ravivar* (Sunday) is the day of the sun. The Sundays in the month of *Bhandon* (Aug.-Sept.) are of greater importance than the other Sundays. When a person wishes to worship the sun on a Sunday, he fasts till *pooja* is performed. A portion of the courtyard is plastered with clay and here the *pooja* is performed. First, the worshipper has his bath. He then lights a '*ghee* lamp' holding it in the direction of the sun. He then moves the *ghee* lamp seven times to describe seven circles. After this he offers water to the sun. This is done in the following manner. A *lota* filled with water is held in both hands and the worshipper faces the sun. Then he slowly lets the water fall to the ground. When the *lota* is empty he bends down, touches the wet soil and applies a little of it on his forehead. While water is being offered, the worshipper should recite *Surya Mantras* (verses in praise of the Sun-god), but because most people are ignorant of the *Surya Mantras*, they merely say, 'Oh sun-god! bless us.'

After the offering of water, *agiari* is performed. When this is over, the worshipper may take food. Some people fast the whole day, without even taking water, but most people eat *roti* and jaggery, or *bhaora* (roasted wheat flour cakes) and jaggery. A little portion of whatever they eat is first offered in the fire in the name of the sun. Salt is not added to any food, because it is forbidden on the day of sun-worship. Further, the food is made from only one kind of grain. No food or water may be had after sunset on this day.

Nowadays very few people are particular about sun-worship. Some of the women observe the worship at home. Some worship the sun in times of illness and some unmarried girls do so in order to get suitable husbands.

Poojas are performed in honour of the goddesses at various times of the year. The general *pooja* of *Bhooian* takes place twice a year, once in *Chait* (March-April) and again in *Aghan* (Nov.-Dec.). It is organised on a grand scale and all the villagers participate in it. The initiative is taken by an elderly Thakur, generally the *Sarpanch* or any other prominent person. He makes a *Gorait* responsible for collecting the subscription which is 50 nP for every household. Further the *Gorait* goes to Lucknow to purchase the *pooja* articles. A sheep and a pig are bought and let free in the jungle. The pig is allowed to escape but the sheep is caught by the *Maali*. The day and time of the *pooja* is announced in every village by a Bhaksor by beat of the drum. The *pooja* is generally performed on a Monday. First, two Thakurs perform *Havan*, or rather 'sit' on *Havan* (which is the literal translation of the phrase in Hindi: *havan par baithna*). They sit before the fire and pour on it, *ghee*, dry fruits, barley, and oil mixed in sugar, as directed by the Pandit. Those who sit on *Havan* fast the whole day. After *Havan*, jaggery syrup is distributed among the unmarried girls, and *prasad* is given to the others. Sometimes when *prasad* is not sufficient for all the attendants, only cloves are distributed.

After the *pooja* there is *rahas* (dance and music performance) at the *deothan* of *Sati*. At this *deothan*, *agiar* and *Havan* are performed before the *rahas* performance. The dance is accompanied by the beat of the drum. When the performance is over, jaggery and sweets are distributed to the dancers.

Bhooian is worshipped by all caste people. Whenever the people pass the *deothan* they bow their heads in reverence and say *Jai Bhooian Ki*. People often sacrifice sheep and goats to this goddess. In illness or any other difficulty the affected family seeks the help of Bhooian. and in times of grave illness promises to offer a sheep or a goat if the patient recovers. The idea is that if the goddess protects the sick person and he recovers, a goat or sheep needs be sacrificed and its flesh distributed as *prasad*.

The *pooja* of Durga Devi is also arranged twice a year, once in the month of *Chait* and again in the month of *Bhadon*. At the *pooja*, small, deep red-coloured flags are offered and *agiari* is performed. These *poojas* are not performed on a grand scale. The only grand *pooja* of Durga Devi is performed in *Devi Paksha* (a

period of nine days in *Kuar* and *Chait*) when all goddesses are worshipped.

The *poojà* of Seetla Maharani is performed on *athon* (the eighth day after *Holi*). Women offer water to Seetla daily, particularly in times of illness; on Mondays and Fridays milk and rice are offered. Women of all castes worship Kali Devi on festivals, especially on the *naumi* (ninth day) of *Kuar* (Sept.–Oct.) and *Kartik* (Nov.–Dec.), and after *Holi*. A grand *pooja* is performed during *Navratra* (a period of nine days) in *Chait*. On this occasion the women assemble at the *deothan* at night and observe *ratjaga* and pass the time in singing songs in praise of Kali. In the morning there is *pooja* and after this seven unmarried girls of any caste are fed with *pooa* (sweet fritters made of flour and jaggery syrup) made for this occasion. Then *prasad* is distributed.

So much about *poojas* and ordinary worship. Then there are the various festivals celebrated with all the pomp and grandeur the village can display. A ceremonial calendar, with the names of the festivals and the months in which they are celebrated, is given here. Of these festivals *Nava*, *Harchatt* and *Aghani* are agricultural festivals dealt with elsewhere in this book.

RELIGIOUS ORGANISATION—CEREMONIAL CALENDAR

Months	*Festivals*
1. Magh (Jan.-Feb.)	1. Sakat
	2. Nava
	3. Makar Sankranti
	4. Basant Panchami
	5. Planting the branch of castor for Holi.
2. Phalgun (Feb.-March)	1. Holi
	2. Shiva Ratri
3. Chait (March-April)	1. Jagan Nath ki Pooja
	2. Ram Naumi.
4. Baisakh (April-May)	1. Jagan Nath ki Pooja (if it was not celebrated in Chait)
	2. Sitwahi Amawasya

5. Jeth (May-June)	1. Dusserah
	2. Bargadhai Amawasya
6. Asarh (June-July)	1. Asarhi
7. Sawan (July-Aug.)	1. Raksha Bandhan
	2. Nag Panchmi
8. Bhandon (Aug.-Sept.)	1. Harchatt
	2. Janmashtami
	3. Nava
	4. Bhadai Amawasya
	5. Kajari Teej
9. Kuar (Sept.-Oct.)	1. Devi Naumi
	2. Vijay Dashmi (or Dusserah)
	3. Pitra Paksha
10. Kartik (Oct.-Nov.)	1. Karwa Chouth
	2. Kartik Purnima
	3. Dewali
	4. Bhaiya Dooj
11. Aghan (Nov.-Dec.)	1. Aghani
12. Poos (Dec.-Jan.)	...

The *Sakat festival* is always celebrated in *Magh*, but the date is not fixed, and sometimes it falls before *Makar Sankranti*, and sometimes after; this is a festival mainly for women, and even among women, only those who have sons, for it is celebrated for the welfare and good health of boys. The Sakat Maharani is worshipped with the belief that she would help the boys in *Sankat* (difficulty). Women of all castes celebrate this festival.

The women who participate in this festival fast for the whole day. In the morning women prepare *pakka* food, including *poori*, *kachauri*, *pooa* and *laddoo* of different varieties. They also prepare *aasi* (a preparation of rice flour and jaggery) and boil *sakarkands* (sweet potatoes) which are used in the worship.

In the evening, the preparations for *pooja* begin and Sakat Maharani's image is made from flour and placed on a wooden plank. On this plank are also placed seven *aasi* and five or seven *sakarkand*. The figure of a goat is outlined on a metal plate with black gingili seeds. On this occasion a betel nut is also worshipped. This betel nut is collected soon after the birth of the first male child and

is worshipped on the first *Sakat* festival. After the festival the nut is retained and worshipped for a whole year. If the nut is lost before the completion of the year, it is replaced by some jaggery made into the shape of a nut.

The *pooja* starts late in the evening after the moon comes up. During the *pooja* the women sit facing the east. *Sindoor* (vermilion powder) is sprinkled on the plank, *aasi*, *sakarkand* and the betel nut are also placed on the plank. A lamp with four wicks is lit. Then the women tell a story of how Sakat Maharani helped a poor woman, but refused to help an avaricious, rich woman. With the end of the story-telling, the *pooja* also ends. Then the women take milk, *sakarkand*, etc., but nothing made of grain. Inasmuch as *Makar Sankaranti* is the festival of a season no particular god is worshipped, but, nevertheless, a share of the day's food is kept apart for the family deity, and this is later consumed by the bachelors in the family. *Makar Sankranti* falls on the 14th January every year, i.e. the day on which the sun enters the *Makar* constellation. People get up early in the morning and bathe. In the morning only *khichri* (a preparation of rice and *urad*) is cooked. Uncooked *khichri*, *ghee* and salt are given to Brahmins and alms to the *praja*. In the evening they eat a *pakka* meal. Among the low caste people, sons-in-law and sisters of the heads of the families are invited. They partake of *khichri* and are also given one or two rupees.

With the coming of the *Holi* festival villagers in their free time assemble in a place and sing *phaag* in the evenings. These *phaags* start from the *Basant* festival when the *Dhaho* is fixed. The *phaags* are of common interest and all castes, including Thakur, Chamar, Pasi, Ahir and Kathik, participate in singing these. Some beat the *dhol* (drum) and others play on *manjira* and *khanjor*.

The following five *phaags* sung during these days are given below in the Roman script.

PHĀGA (HOLĪ)—I

Sakhi Gopāl galin men gāveṉ
Gāvat gāvat vahāṉ gae

Jhan parī sāṉkarī gēl
Jān na pāvēṉ Nandadulāre
Lāo sabē mili gheri
Sakhi Gopāl..................
Rādhā ek añjan banavāvā
Nō aṅgurī das por
Añjan lonā param salonā
Tum citavō hamarī or
Sakhi Gopāl................
Jetanī siṭkī bhuī māṉ pari hēṉ
Otanī garhī kumhār
Tetane Rāvan rājā hoi gae
Laṅkā ke darbār
Sakhi Gopāl................
Sab kōnrathiyā kabīr uṭhahiyā
Hoi gayo kaṇḍava kīc
Rādhā gorī bichuli parī hēṉ
Uṭhihēṉ sab mili gheri
Sakhi Gopāl................

Gopal moves in the village alley, singing.

As he reaches there, narrow as it is, he is surrounded by Radha's party who will not let him go.

Radha gets some good *kajal* (collyrium) made, and when she puts it to her eyes, she looks dazzling and graceful, and Krishna cannot help gazing at her.

There are innumerable pebble-pieces lying on the ground, and as many are made by the potter; almost as many have been the kings and rulers on the earth; (such is the law of nature.)

The *Kamrathias* lift their *Kamar* and there is terrible dust and slush; Radha slips in the mud but immediately gets up to encircle the cowherd hero.

PHĀGA (HOLĪ)—2

Ab mori bān Pavanasut ṭūṭī
Avadhpurī sī chūṭī
Saktī bān lage Lachiman ke

Nāri Jānakī asur ghar chūṭī
Ab mori....................
Jo suni paihēn̲ mātu Sumitrā
Khāi marihēn̲ bis būṭī
Avadhpurī mẽ sor paregā
Jāy Laṅka hoi gae ṭūṭī
Ab mori..................
Kehi paṭhavōn̲ ko jāy Drongiri
Lai āvẽ sajīvan būṭī
Parbat dūri rẽn rahi thorī
Ihān̲ Lachiman kī nārī chūṭī
Ab mori..................
Aṅgad nām Bāli ko beṭā
Bāt kahe ek choṭī
Tulasidās Añjani ko nandan
Lai āvēn̲ sajīvan būṭī
Ab mori..................

This is an anecdote from the *Ramayana.*

Rama's prestige was in danger; his brother Lakshamana was lying on his death-bed with a fatal arrow-wound; Janaki was a captive at the palace of the great Asur King Ravana. Should Sumitra (Lakshamana's mother) come to hear of it, she would commit suicide and there would be disturbances in Avadh. Who could be sent to Mt. Drona to fetch the life-giving herb? The mountain was far away, and little was left of the night (Lakshamana, it was said, would die of his wounds with the first rays of the morning sun), and Lakshamana's pulse was extremely weak. Angad, son of Bali, put forward a suggestion: the son of Anjani was capable of traversing the distance to Mt. Drona and fetching the herb. This was eventually done with success.

PHĀGA (HOLĪ)—3

Gvālini sir par dhare gagariyā
Ghar apane te chalī akelī
Saṅg nahīn̲ dūsarī gujariyā
Jāy ke pahũchī Jamunā taṭ par

Pari gē Krisna najariyā
Gvālini sir................
Kāhe kī tori gagarī ghēlanā
Kāhe keri īdariyā
Kaune sagar se jal lai aihō
Jaihō kōni dagariyā
Gvālini sir................
Sarab sone kī gagarī ghēlanā
Motī keri bīṛariyā
Jamunā sagar se jal bhari laihōṉ
Jaihōṉ Mathurā nagariyā
Gvālini sir................
Bhari picakārī māro Krisna ne
Ṭapke raṅg kesariyā
Aṅg aṅg mē̃ raṅg birājē
Bhījī kusum cunariyā
Gvālini sir..................
Sūr Syām phāgun kī Holī
Roke Krisna ḍagariyā
Dhari bahīyāṉ mukh malī abīrā
Jorē hāth gujariyā
Gvālini sir................

This *phaag* describes the plight of the cowherd woman who went to sell milk and curds, but chanced to meet Krishna near the Jamuna. Krishna stopped her on the way, and drenched her with colour. Thus did he enjoy the colour-festival of *Holi*.

PHAGA (HOLĪ)—4

Ūdhō ab ke gaye kab aihō
Sāvan mē̃ Hari āvan kahi gae
Bhādōṉ aṅg lagaihō
Kvār mās Hari abahūṉ āvō
Kapatī mitra kahaihō
Ūdhō ab..................
Kātik karam likhī so hoī
Agahan ugra janaiyō

Pūs mē pālā pare sakhī rī
Kehi ke gare lapṭeihō
Ūdhō ab..................
Māghē māri gayo Hari hamkā
Phāgun raṅg uṛaihō
Cait mās ban phūlī camelī
Kehi ke gare pahiraihō
Ūdhō ab..................
Baisākhē lūk lagē tan more
Jeṭhē tapani bujhaihō
Asārh mō āsā pūran kai jaihō
Sūradās jas gaihōn̲
Ūdhō ab.....................

The desires of the cowherd women of Braj, after Krishna had left for Mathura, are described in a monologue addressed to Udhava, a friend and associate of Krishna, whom the latter had sent back home to tell the people of Braj that Krishna would never return to the village. Every month of the year, as the season changes, the pattern of desires also undergoes a change.

PHĀGA (HOLĪ)—5

Raṅg race Krisna Gokul maʾhān̲
Bājat tāl mridaṅga jhān̲jha daph
Aōr mañjīrā sahnaiyā
Pē ḍhol pakhāvaj saṅg bare
Murcaṅga bānsurī sarsaiyā
It dhudhukat dhudhukat grigat grigat
Dudumuk dudumuk giṛkaiyā
It chumuk chumuk kētāl uṭhē
Sirikrisna nāci dē thirkaiyā
Raṅg race................
Uṭhat taraṅg tān kī jhumkuni
Nūpur jevar pēn̲janiyān̲
Koi gāvat tāl tān sur sādhe
Saras rāg kī dhunkaiyān̲
Suni pañchī sor macāi rahe

Uṛi jāy lasen̲ brikkhan maĩhān̲
Ban kī gauven̲ sab mohi rahīn̲
Chabi dekhi mukuṭ kī parchaĩyān̲
Raṅg race................
Nācat gāvat cale Kanhaiyā
Vahīn̲ kadam kī thī chaiyān̲
Ut Rādhā gopī saṅg līnā
Jab āvat dekhini kuñjan maihān̲
Sunā sabda Rādhikā cakit bhaĩ
Jab āya milo cān̲cari maĩhān̲
It chumuk chumuk thirkat thirkat
Hāsīn̲ jāy unkī chaĩyān̲
Raṅg race................
Uṛe gulāl lāl bhae bādar
Raṅg ki sobhā adhikaĩyān̲
Pāy ēsa rūp Krisna Rādhā ko
Dekhi devatā harkhaĩyān̲
Ānand magan phūl barsāvat
Karat ḍaṅḍavat man maĩhān̲
It Lakchaman Lāl kahat Holī
Dhare dhyān hirday maĩhān̲
Raṅg race................

This is a poetic composition adorned with a number of figures of speech. It describes the way Krishna organised a *raas* (musical opera) in Braj-Gokul. So alluring was the whole scene at that time that everything, including the river Jamuna, birds and animals—in fact nature stood spell-bound, watching the dance, listening to the music of the drums, flute, and bells, and admiring the graceful figures of the colourfully-dressed women and the handsome, dark cowherd boy Krishna.

The fifth day in the second fortnight of *Magh* is celebrated as *Basant Panchmi.* At this festival again no particular god other than the family deity is worshipped. Some people, however, go to the *Shivala.* No yellow dresses are put on by the villagers, as is the custom in towns, nor is any *pakka* food cooked to celebrate the festival. An old practice still in vogue is that a *mali*

takes mango blossoms to the villagers and every family to which he takes the blossoms gives him a seer of grain.

In the evening is the ceremony of the planting of a branch of the castor plant. The site generally chosen lies to the north-east of the village. There is no auspicious time for this planting. Once the branch is planted, firewood is heaped around it for burning on *Holi* day. On this day also begins the singing of *Holi* songs. The songs or *phaags* as they are called are sung to the accompaniment of the drum and other musical instruments. Whenever the villagers find any leisure they assemble at a particular place to sing these *phaags*. All castes participate in the singing. Formerly the people met together to sing the *phaags* once in two or three days, but now they do so only four or five times in the whole month.

The actual festival of *Holi* falls on the last day of *Phalgun*, which is a full moon day. The day after *Holi* is known as *Dhurairi*. About a week before the *Holi* festival, women of all castes prepare *ballas*. *Ballas* are figures of sun, moon and other round objects made of cowdung. Each *balla* has a hole in the middle. Of all the festivals celebrated in the village, *Holi* is the most important, and so most people purchase new clothes and shoes. When the day of *Holi* dawns, houses are cleaned, walls coated with clay and floors plastered with cowdung. All this is generally done by the women. During the day most people are busy with their work in the fields, but some of them go to Lucknow to buy clothes, colours etc., for the occasion. After sunset, a festive atmosphere pervades the village and this is clearly seen in the activities of the older people. They go to the fields to pluck linseed and barley plants to be burnt in the *Holi* fire. Boys collect wood, dry stalks of plants, rotten thatch and other combustible materials. All these are placed under the castor branch.

The auspicious moment for lighting the fire is announced by the Pandit of the village. He also pronounces aloud certain alphabets, and those whose names begin with these alphabets should not see the *Holi* fire or participate in any *Holi* celebrations of the year. The *ballas* which the women made are strung together. A little while before the fire is lit, a person goes round the village asking the people to get ready to witness the *Holi* fire. The *Nain*

go to their respective *jajmans'* houses and apply *ubtan* on the children's faces and legs. For this each is paid one or two seers of grain at every house. The *ubtan* that is left over is put into the rings of *ballas*.

Then all the people go to the place where the *Holi* fire is lit. Each person takes with him five or seven rings of *ballas* and a bundle of linseed and barley plants. Those prohibited by the Pandit from participating in the *Holi* celebrations stay away. As the people go to *Harauri* where the fuel for the bonfire is collected, each is careful lest his feet come in contact with another person's feet. When they reach their destination, every man goes round the heap of fuel five or seven times. At the completion of each round he throws a bud of linseed and an ear of barley on the heap. At the end of the last round, he throws the five or seven rings of *ballas* on it. In going round, too, they avoid touching each others' feet. Then they sit on the ground and sing *phaags* while a few play on musical instruments.

A man is appointed by the Pandit to light the fire. The one who lights the fire enjoys certain privileges, for Dr. M. has donated a plot (10 *biswas*), to be cultivated and the produce enjoyed by the one who lights the fire. Formerly a *Bhat* from a neighbouring village lit the *Holi* fire in Mohana every year, and he was in possession of that plot. Further he also got some money, though seldom more than 6 nP from every household. A few years back the *Bhat* gave up lighting the *Holi* fire, and it was then done by Dunni Maharaj. The plot of 10 *biswas* was handed over to him. But in 1956 Dunni Maharaj refused to light the fire because, he complained, the villagers never gave him his due share of money. No one was willing to light the fire, but the Pandit and a few others persuaded Maiku Kathik to do it. The piece of land is now cultivated by Maiku Kathik.

Before the fire is lit, a little water is sprinkled on the fuel. Then the one who lights the fire goes round the heap of fuel three times, with some burning stalks and twigs in his hands. When the three rounds are over, he applies fire to the heap of fuel. As soon as the fire is lit, the young boys shout at the top of their voices, *Holi hai*. Just before the fire is lit, people bend their heads or turn aside, for they do not think it proper to witness the lighting of the *Holi* fire.

When the fire is lit some of the high-caste women make offerings of new grain preparations to *Holi*. They bow before the bonfire and put the delicacies into it. People roast linseed and barley in the fire, and also take some fire with them to light their *chulas* at home. All the while, there is singing, and when the singing is over, the people disperse. The man who lights the fire applies *teeka* with curds and turmeric on the foreheads of Thakurs and Ahirs, and for this, receives some presents from them at the time of the harvest.

On the morning of *Dhurairi*, the people clean their cattle-sheds and courtyards. Bullocks, cows and buffaloes are given a good bath in a pond. Coal powder mixed with a little oil is applied on their horns, and palm-prints in coal on their bodies. It is on this day that they throw coloured water on one another. This is not very common, for people lose their temper if any coloured water is thrown on them because it spoils their clothes. Then again there are restrictions in the throwing of coloured water, and a low-caste cannot throw coloured water on a high-caste. So generally only boys amuse themselves by throwing coloured water on one another. If metal syringes are not available, they use bamboo syringes. This year Jadu Nath Singh's grandson Ram Suresh was very vigorous with a cycle pump and blue ink, but he had to retire early, as his elder brother thrashed him for spoiling the pump and wasting ink. *Holi* was not celebrated with any grandeur in 1955 as the villagers were down-hearted over the failure of two consecutive crops.

At noon when the people are free, they assemble at a particular place and then go round the village in a procession singing *phaags*. In the singing of the *phaags* a healthy rivalry develops, one party trying to out-shout the other party by singing the *phaags* in a louder tone. In the afternoon the *phaag* procession splits into several processions on the basis of caste, and they go round singing *phaags*. But the Thakurs sing abusive songs known as *kabirs*. These *kabirs* were originally sung in abuse of *Holka*, but the Thakurs being the dominant caste took it upon themselves to sing *kabirs* and abuse the women of other castes. However, owing to strong objections from the lower castes, this custom was given up very recently.

In the evening the people put on new clothes, and visit one

another, *Holi milne*, as the expression goes. In this again, caste restrictions are observed. A man can visit only his fellow caste people, or those of the higher castes. When a man goes to the house of a higher caste man, the former says *Ram Ram* or *Jai Ram Ji Ki* and the latter responds in a similar way. When a Thakur goes to the house of another Thakur, they embrace each other. This custom is now spreading among the other caste people also. Late in the evening, Thakurs from eleven villages, viz., Mohana, Nadua, Bana, Rampur, Sheogarh, Rudahi, Magat, Naguamani, Jhalha, Bargadi Mawai and Shampur, assemble in the last mentioned village 'to meet Holi.' On *Dhurairi* day no one does any work, and it is observed as a holiday.

Another festival celebrated in *Phalgun* is Shiv Ratri. This is another of the festivals celebrated with great enthusiasm. The day begins with an early morning bath. Some of the villagers go to Lucknow and Kanpur to bathe in the holy rivers. Ganga water is brought to be offered at the temple. After a bath, the people go to the *Shivala* and offer *Dhatoora* flowers, *ghee* and jaggery to Shiv. Small *ghee* lamps are lit and incense and sugar are offered to the deity. Then, as the bell is rung, *pooja* is performed, and *prasad* including plums, sugarcane, barley, rice and milk is offered. Some people fast the whole day and no one takes any cereal food. When *pooja* is over, devotional songs are sung in the *Shivala* and also in many homes. Women do not go to the temple to worship, but observe it at home. The various *deothans* of Shivji are also given due honour, and celebrations are held there.

Keeping awake throughout the night, singing devotional songs, is another feature of this festival. Of course children are exempted from this. The others take a bath again in the evening before they sit down to sing the songs during the night.

The day is not observed as a holiday and field operations continue, but those fasting do not go to their fields. All castes observe Shiv Ratri, but the Chamars are not allowed to go into the *Shivala*, and so they perform the worship at home.

Jagan Nath ki Pooja or the worship of Jagan Nath is observed once a year, either in *Chait* or in *Baisakh*. It falls on the first Monday of the aforesaid months. The image of Jagan Nath

rests in a temple at Jagan Nath Puri to which place pilgrims from all corners of India flock for *darshan.* It is said that Jagan Nath is the god of prosperity and by his grace one can flourish in all spheres of life. Therefore, every person desires to visit this place. In Jagan Nath Puri, no distinction is made between the high and the low, the 'touchable' and the 'untouchable'. Thus a man of a high caste and one of a scheduled caste will dine together in Jagan Nath Puri. Diseased people, especially lepers, go in large numbers, as it is believed that every type of disease, of however long a duration, is cured by the grace of Jagan Nath. These diseased people are also allowed to mingle with others. The pilgrim brings home with him a cane and a portrait of Jagan Nath.

Among the Hindus *sraddh* and feast to ancestors is observed every year, but those who go to Jagan Nath Puri and perform the last rites of their ancestors there, need not observe *sraddh* at any time, because it is believed that the deceased gets sufficient food and water by the kindness of Jagan Nathji.

On this occasion, *ghee* and rice, considered as the *prasad* of Jagan Nath, are distributed among the pilgrims. The remaining rice known as *Jagan Nathan ke seedh* (rice offered to Jagan Nath) is dried and kept safely by one person, who distributes it among his caste people and friends. This *seedh* is of a high ritual value because it is believed that when the *seedh* is kept in a bag of grain, money box, etc., the stock in which it is kept never runs short. Therefore, at marriages and other functions the *seedh* is kept among foodstuffs, so that it may suffice the needs of all.

Jagan Nath ki Pooja is a sacred festival and is generally celebrated among the high-caste people, but everyone who can afford it tries to go to Jagan Nath Puri to celebrate the festival.

At home, the *pooja* is performed at noon by women who fast the whole day. The house is thoroughly cleaned and the place where the *pooja* is to be performed is plastered with cowdung, and the walls are plastered with clay. *Pakka* food is prepared in the morning. For the *pooja, goordhania* (roasted wheat mixed with jaggery) and *gujhia* (a sweet preparation) are made. Seven ears of wheat, seven unripe mangoes (preferably in one twig), *tesoo* flowers and *kusum* flowers are also brought for the *pooja.* The *pooja* articles, a cane and a picture of Jagan Nath are placed on

a plank of wood by a wall. Above the wooden plank a small area of the wall is plastered and palm-prints in *peetha* (rice flour mixed with water) are made on it, and *sindoor* sprinkled over the palm-prints.

During the *pooja* a story about the kindness of Jagan Nath is narrated. After *pooja*, *agiari* is performed and all members of the family say aloud, 'May Jagan Nath bless us !' Then the *prasad* is distributed among members of the family, including infants, and is also given to the *prajas*. The women who offer *pooja* take only a sweet drink, while the others take food but not before the *pooja*. The *pooja* is performed for the welfare and good health of the family and also for the prosperity of the home. It is performed only by married women.

The festival of *Sitwahi-Amavasya* falls on the *amavasya* of *Baisakh*. On this day, *sitwa* (flour of roasted gram and barley), after which the festival is named, is distributed to the *prajas*. The festival commences at dawn when the people have their bath and after that take the *sitwa* to which a little water is added, and also some salt or jaggery. But before the people take *sitwa* themselves, each family sets aside about half a *seer* of it for the Pandit. The Pandit's share is either collected by him or is sent to him through one of the family. The Pandit accepts *sitwa* only from the high caste people, and from the others he receives grain. The *prajas*, like the Kumhars, Lohars, Nais and Dhobis go to receive their *teohari* (festival gifts) from their *jajmans*. They are given about a quarter-seer of *sitwa* as *teohari*.

On the *Sitwahi-Amawasya* day a *sadhu* from Ayodhya visits the village. Once, Government orders were issued for the provision of alms to *sadhus*, and following these, the giving of alms to these mendicants has become an established custom. The villagers give the *sadhu sitwa*, or grain or money ranging from 50 nP to a rupee. The headman and *Chaukidar* accompany the *sadhu* as he goes from door to door on his round of 'dignified begging', to prevent any quarrels, for *sadhus* are often quarrelsome people.

In the evening, a grand fair of Chandika Devi takes place at Chandikar, about 10 miles to the south-west of the village. Most men and a few women go there to have *darshan* of the Devi. There they offer *prasad* to the Devi after taking a bath in the

river Gomti. Another fair, in honour of Laltan Devi is held in Nagnaman, two miles distant from the village. A majority of the villagers, especially the women, attend this fair because of its nearness. Here also the people offer *prasad* to the Devi, after taking bath at a near-by well. The people return home the same day.

The tenth day in the first fortnight of *Jeth* is observed as *Dusserah.* People start making cowdung cakes on this day, and continue making them till the advent of the rains. The first five cakes are bigger than the others and they are decorated with pumpkin flowers and sprinkled over with grains of rice. They are placed on earthen saucers and again decorated with rice and flowers. The saucers are placed in the courtyard and lighted earthen lamps are kept before them. Some people fast on this day and offer water at the village Mahadev temple. The festival is observed by all caste people, but the low-caste people are not allowed to make offerings to Mahadev in the temple. So they do it at the *deothan.*

The *bargad* (banyan) tree is worshipped on the festival of *Bargadhai Amavasya,* which falls on the *Amavasya* of *Jeth.* The festival is celebrated by women for the good health and prosperity of their husbands. All castes, except the Chamars and the Bhaksors, celebrate it. In the morning, the house is cleaned, the walls whitewashed and the floors plastered with cowdung. Generally *pakka* food is prepared including *pooris, kachauries, pooa, gujhia* and *papar.* Poor families who cannot afford to prepare *pakka* food prepare only the *pooja* articles. The *pooja* articles include gram soaked in water, *khoont* (small *poori*-like preparations) and seven or nine *bargad* (small shell-shaped sweetmeats resembling *bargad*—the fruit of the banyan tree).

In the past, about 20 years ago, there was no banyan tree in the village. So the women used to go to Amarpur, a village about a mile and a half to the south of Mohana, to worship the banyan tree there. Then Baldeo Maharaj planted a banyan tree near the school and this is now worshipped on the *Bargadhai Amavasya.*

At the time of worship the women wear clean, coloured (usually yellow) *dhotis.* They fast and do not take even water until *pooja* is performed. One of the women, who is leader of the ceremony,

carries to the banyan tree a metal plate in which the *pooja* articles are kept and also a *lota* full of water. Two or three strands of *janeu* (sacred thread) are made of *kachcha* thread and dyed in turmeric. The *janeu* is offered to the banyan tree and one is worn round the neck by the woman (the leader). She does not remove the thread, and it remains round her neck till it breaks of itself.

The *pooja* is performed in the following way. First the leader applies palm-prints in *peetha* on the trunk of the tree. Then she sprinkles vermilion on it. After that *agiari* is performed in which *ghee* and jaggery are offered to the fire. The leader next goes round the tree seven times. As she goes round, she winds the *janeu* round the tree trunk, and on completion of one round, she offers one of each of the *pooja* articles to the tree. Likewise, one by one, the other women also go round the tree seven times and offer the *pooja* articles.

A part of the *pooja* articles is given to a *Mali* who usually comes from Kutua. *Pooja* over, *prasad* is distributed among children and others present there. The women who celebrate the festival take a sweet drink and some of the *pooja* offerings and return home. All members of the family have a share in the *prasad* and *pakka* food. On this day food is prepared only once and that is in the evening.

Asarhi, as the name denotes, falls in the month of *Asarh*. This is also a festival for women and is celebrated on the day of the full moon. It is a festival in which the women express their gratitude for the gift of husband or child and so on, and fulfil their promises to the Devi, if they have made any.

The festival starts in the morning when both men and women draw lines with cowdung on the walls of their houses. These lines are drawn in the belief that snakes will not enter the house, because they cannot cross the cowdung lines. The women then prepare *puris* and *papars*. Among the low castes, *kachcha* food is prepared. The women then go to worship the goddess and offer her nine *papars* each. The Bhaksor accompanies the women, beating the drum, and he is given one or two *papars* by each woman.

Girls of the village who are married elsewhere come to their parental homes for this festival. If a woman has been blessed with a child, she usually arranges to have the *mundan* ceremony

of the child on this occasion. If a girl is newly married, she and her husband come to have a *darshan* of the goddess.

The festival of *Raksha Bandhan* or *Sanoona* falls on the full moon day in *Sawan*, in the middle of the rainy season. The term *Raksha Bandhan* literally means 'the bond of safety'. Sisters tie a coloured thread on the right wrists of their brothers, who are then responsible for the safety and welfare of the sisters. The thread is tied either by the girls themselves or by the Pandit on their behalf. The menfolk take bath and offer water to Mahadev in the village temple. In the mean time, the women prepare *pakka* food. The village Pandit then sets out to tie the sacred red thread on the wrists of the men. He gets two seers of grain for this. A few years back the Thakur used to give clothes to the Pandit on this occasion, but now hard times preclude the possibility of such gifts. The Pandit does not go to the houses of the Bhaksor, the Chamar, the Pasi and the Dhobi. He sits near one of the *deothans* and the low caste men go there to have the thread tied. From the low caste people the Pandit receives 1-12 nP and from half to two seers of grain.

The girls also tie the thread on the wrists of their brothers and get some presents in return. Girls living with their husbands or with their husbands' families, send the thread and some sweetmeats to their brothers, and in return get double the amount they spend. The day is observed with great festivity by the girls. They apply *mehndi* (*henna*: leaves of a tree which when crushed give out a red juice) on their hands and feet, sing *Kajlis* and swing on the swings hung from big trees. The men however go to work in the fields when the tying of the thread and the giving and receiving of presents are over.

The festival of *Nag Panchmi*, which falls on the fifth day of the second fortnight in the month of *Sawan*, is the day on which *Nag Devata* or the snake god is worshipped. In the morning all the villagers, including children, take their bath. Then the men go out to worship the snake god. They take with them milk, rice, flowers and *kheer* (rice and milk pudding) which they place near holes supposed to be the abode of snakes. It is believed that the snakes come out and consume the food thus left by the men. Those who perform the worship at home draw five or seven snakes in

colour on a wooden platform, the central figure being a bigger snake drawn by the eldest woman of the family. These figures are often drawn with wheat flour mixed with colours. The worshippers sprinkle *kheer* and flowers over the images and with folded hands beg pardon of the snake god for misdeeds committed in ignorance. Only after the worship do the people take food.

Then follow the festivities of the day. Wrestling bouts are held in an arena constructed by the boys of the village near the *devothan* of Bhooian. The bouts are referred and conducted by an elderly Thakur of the village. The wrestling starts at noon and goes on till sunset. The referee selects a young man desirous of wrestling, and goes to select his rival. The bout takes place if the boy selected is willing to wrestle and is about the same age and weight as the opponent. There is no caste bar and a Chamar may wrestle with a Thakur. There are no age restrictions either, and the wrestlers might be boys of about 6 or 8 years of age or strong young men of 30. Spectators give cash prizes to the wrestlers ranging from 12 nP to 50 nP and a rupee to whose who wrestle with exceptional ability.

While the wrestling bouts are in progress a Chamar plays a martial tune on the drum to encourage the wrestlers. The tune that he plays is that of the song *Uthai ke dai mar* (Get the fellow down who dares to stand up against you).

Another popular feature of this festival is the beating of dolls which takes place in the evening after the wrestling bout. Each family contributes a doll, and the dolls are collected in a particular place. They are sent to this place through girls. If there is no girl in a family, it is sent through a girl of another family. The dolls are generally green, pink, blue or yellow in colour, with their hair done with black thread. In the ritual of beating the dolls, there is no caste bar. The beating is done by boys. Chamars do not send any dolls, but the Chamar boys join in the beating. Every family sends its quota of fried gram, which is distributed among the boys who take part in the beating. The distribution is done by the girls who bring the dolls and witness the beating.

The festival is observed as a holiday. Married girls are invited to their parental homes for the occasion. To those who cannot come for some reason or the other money and clothes are sent.

The *dhotis* sent to them are usually pink or yellow. The finer varieties of *dhotis* which cannot be coloured are sprinkled with colour in one corner. The money given to the girls ranges between Re. 1 and Rs. 5 according to the economic status of the father. Girls who come to their fathers' houses also receive these presents.

Swings are very popular on this day, and everybody, irrespective of age, caste and sex, takes to them on *Nag Panchmi*. Big ropes are hung from trees, and wooden planks tied to them. The girls swinging in their multi-coloured *dhotis* and singing *Kajlis* add to the glamour of the day.

Some of the people go to the neighbouring villages to witness *lathi*, dagger and sword fights. Generally, *pakka* food is prepared on this day, but the Chamar, owing to their poverty, are forced to prepare only *kachcha* food.

The birthday of Lord Krishna, known as *Janmashtami* falls on the eighth day of the first fortnight in *Bhadon*. The villagers fast the whole day, taking only water and some sweet drink. The fast is continued till midnight, at which hour Krishna is supposed to have been born. At midnight a *pooja* is performed, and the fast is broken by taking the *prasad*.

On the morning of *Janmashtami* a few responsible Thakur collect money from all the villagers, to be spent on celebrating the day. The subscription varies from 12 nP to Rs. 10 per house. Part of the money is given to the Pandit to prepare *prasad*. Quite often the Pandit is not given cash but is provided with the ingredients of the *prasad* and is asked to prepare it. The *prasad* includes *charnamrit* (curds mixed with dry fruits and *tulsi* leaves).

When money is collected, a place is selected to place the *Ram Dol*. (*Ram Dol* is the swing on which the images of gods collected from different people are placed at this festival. The term now includes also the decorations and illuminations around the image of Krishna.) The *Ram Dol* is placed at one of the Thakur residences, which is decorated with coloured papers, buntings and flowers. The *Ram Dol* is sheltered by a *mandap* or canopy which rests on bamboo poles. On the *Ram Dol* are placed all the images of Krishna. Generally all images face east, but this is not observed very rigidly and often they face the entrance to the house.

All the castes celebrate this festival. The people gather before

the *Ram Dol* and sing *Bhajans* and *Keertans* till midnight. The singers are offered *bidis* and *ganja*. At midnight the Pandit performs the *pooja*. First the image of Krishna is bathed in *Panchamrit* and dried with a cloth. *Prasad* is offered to it. Then the Pandit performs *arti*, after which the *panchamrit* and *prasad* are distributed to all present, by some elderly Thakur. The Pandit gets a rupee or two for conducting the *pooja*.

The *Ram Dol* remains in the same place for three days and then is taken round the village to every house, except the houses of Chamar, Pasi, Dhobi and Bhaksor. The *Ram Dol* is carried by the Nai. At every house the Pandit is given a pice or so. One-fourth of this amount is shared by the Nai. After being taken in procession through the lanes of the villages the *Ram Dol* is taken to *Bari Taal*. An elderly and healthy Thakur swimmer is selected. A pitcher of curds is placed on his head, and he enters the *Taal*. Then ensues a scramble for the curds in the pitcher. All castes participate in this. The scrambling villagers do not care for the breaking of the pitcher, but enjoy the loot. This ceremony is observed to commemorate the curd- and butter-stealing acts of Lord Krishna. Then the broken pieces of the pitcher are submerged in the waters of the *Taal*, and the villagers after going to the *Shivala* take the *Ram Dol* to its place. Sometimes this act of stealing butter and curds, known as *Krishna Bela*, is observed in a different way. A few men represent *Gujris* (the *Gwalas* girl) with a big pot filled with curds, and a few other men represent *Bal Gopal* (the *Gwala* boys). Those representing *Gujris* dance and the others try to steal the curds. The ceremony ends with the stealing of the curds and the breaking of the pots.

The origin of the *Bhadai Amavas* festival is not known to any of the villagers. As usual the festival starts with an early morning bath, which is taken as an act of purification, before which they do not eat or drink or smoke. Those who can afford it, go to Kanpur to take a dip in the Ganga, and bring a little of its water to the village. One drop of Ganga water is supposed to sanctify a whole basin of water. The Ganga water is offered to Mahadev on *Teej* festival. Many of the villagers go to Nodhesur (about 36 miles away from Mohana) and offer the Ganga water to Mahadev there. Those who cannot go to Kanpur, go to Lucknow and bathe in

the Gomti. The villagers, who carry the holy water of the Ganga or the Gomti to the Mahadev of Nodhesur, always go on foot and return on foot. Those taking bath in the village offer water to the local Mahadev on the day of *Bhadai Amavas*, but those going to Lucknow or Kanpur offer it on the *Teej* festival which falls three days later. For the three days when they offer the water to the local Mahadev or to the Mahadev of Nodhesur, they do not sleep on cots. *Bhadai Amavas*, as the name suggests, falls on the *Amavasya* of *Bhadon*.

The third day after *Bhadai Amavas* is *Kajari Teej*, commonly known as *Teej*. This is mainly a festival for girls. It is a popular belief in the village that unmarried girls, who worship Mahadev on *Kajari Teej*, will get good husbands, and the married girls will lead prosperous lives and will never be separated from their husbands. It is a gay festival. Girls wear gaudy coloured saris with beautiful borders. They go out to meet one another and sing *Kajlis*. The girls and little children enjoy themselves on the swings after the *pooja* is performed. The *Mali* of Kutwa brings flowers for the *pooja*. The girls keep rice, *roti*, *ghee*, jaggery and water in metal plates. All the contents of the plate are thrown over the Mahadev image. Only after this the girls eat their food. On this day only *pakka* food is prepared.

The *naumi* or ninth day of *Kuar* is known as *Devi Naumi* when Bhooian Maharani receives formal homage from the villagers. Soon after the early morning bath, *kaner* flowers are offered to the Devi together with a bucket of water. Any promises made in the previous year, in return for favours granted by the Devi, are made good on this day and whatever is to be offered is placed on her *deothan*. Food is eaten only after the worship. The worship is performed by men alone.

The day after *Devi Naumi*, i.e., the *dashmi* (tenth) of *Kuar*, is *Vijay Dashmi* or *Dusserah*. This festival has a dual significance for, in celebrating the victory of Ram over Ravana, Durga Devi is worshipped and adored, for it was by her grace that Ram was able to overcome Ravana. Hence a grand *pooja* is performed in honour of Durga Devi.

Elders of the village fast and offer food to the village Mahadev and the family gods. The younger people go to Kandion to see

Ram Lila (a dramatisation of the story of Ram) in which an effigy of Ravana is burnt amidst great shouts and unrestrained rejoicings. Some of the people go to Lucknow to watch the celebrations there. Very seldom do the people go to work in the fields on this day.

Pitr Paksha is a fortnight devoted to the worship of ancestors. *Pitr* means ancestor and *paksha* means a fortnight. The period of *Pitr Paksha* runs from *Pareva* (the first day) to *Amavasya* (the last day) of the first fortnight in *Kuar*. These days are considered as days of austerity and no festive or religious ceremony except those connected with ancestor worship is celebrated. These days are called *garudin* (days of sorrow) by the villagers.

In most cases, the eldest son offers water to the ancestors, but sometimes the youngest son also does this. If the deceased has no sons, then the brother offers water to him. During this fortnight water libations are made in the name of the ancestors. First the person concerned takes bath either at a well or a tank. A Pandit comes and recites the *mantras* and directs the person to offer water. The water is taken in a big metal plate. The offerer wears *paaithi* (a ring-like structure) made of *kus* (a kind of fragrant grass) on the fingers of both hands. Then, facing the south, he takes the water from the plate in cupped hands and throws it on the ground. The little water that remains in the plate in the end is poured on the ground. It is believed that water thus offered to the ancestors quenches their thirst. This offering of water is done throughout the fortnight.

During the fortnight the ceremony of *sradh* is observed. Generally it is observed on the *tithi* (date) of the father's ancestor's death. The Hindu calendar year is divided into 12 months, each month into 2 *paakhs*, and each *paakh* into 15 *tithis* or days. The month or *paakh* of the person's death is not taken into account but only the date. So if a man died on the 12th day of any *paakh* of any month in any year, *sradh* is performed for him on the 12th day of this fortnight. On this particular day, the house is cleaned and the floor plastered with cowdung. The person who does this does not take food or water till the ceremony is over. First, *pinda* are made by the Pandit and the Nai assists him. *Pinda* are shell-shaped sweets made with rice-flour. These *pinda* are kept on *dhaak* leaves, under which *kus* is spread. The *kus* is tied at both ends. The

pinda, which vary in number according to the number of ancestors, are then offered with food and water. After this they are immersed in a pond. Usually the Nai takes them to the pond. Then the place where the *pinda* were made is cleaned. The Brahmin gets *seedha, ghee* etc., and he prepares the food himself. Generally, five Brahmins are fed on this day, for through them the ancestors are fed, thus goes the belief. Hence good food is given to the Brahmins, food which the ancestors would relish. Well-to-do families give also a pair of *dhotis*, one for the Pandit and one for the Panditain. Relatives are also invited for the *sradh* feast.

The son or brother who offers water to the ancestor does not have his hair shaved during this fortnight and his clothes are not sent for washing till the period is over. The family abstains from non-vegetarian food and liquor during these 15 days.

Pitr Paksha is celebrated by all castes. Generally, the low-caste people do not invite the Pandit to offer water.

There is a belief prevalent that if a person goes for Ganga-pilgrimage and offers *pinda* to his ancestors on the bank of the sacred river, his ancestors are assured of salvation, and he need not perform the annual *Jal-dan* or *sradh* ceremony any longer. Similarly, if he has visited Gaya and performed the last rites of his ancestors there, he is absolved of the *sradh* obligations to his ancestors.

The festival of *Karwa Chouth* is celebrated exclusively by women. Women whose husbands are alive fast till the evening and take food only after worshipping the moon god. If the moon cannot be seen, an image of him is made and worshipped. Coloured rice paste together with vermilion is applied on *lotas*. They are placed on *chowkis* (low wooden tables) and covered with small earthen saucers which are filled with seven types of grain—wheat, barley, maize, paddy and three kinds of pulses. Five pieces of straw are placed beside the *lotas*, two on the right and three on the left. The *chowki* is then shown to the moon and prayers are offered for the long life of husbands and sons. After the prayer, the women gather in groups of four or five and take their *chowkis* to the houses of their relatives and their caste people. All the while they sing *Bhajans*. In every house the women bow before the *chowkis* in reverence. When the *chowki* has been taken to all the families concerned, the women return home and take food.

Kartik Purnima is the full moon day in *Kartik.* The day is observed by taking dips in the holy waters. People go to the Ganga or the Gomti and if they cannot go to these rivers they take bath in the village and offer water and flowers to Mahadev. No special food is cooked on this day and generally it is not observed as a holiday. Those who go to Kanpur bring water from the Ganga and offer it to Mahadev at the local temple or go to Lodeshwar, 30 miles from Mohana, or to Gola Gokaran to offer it. People go to Lodeshwar on foot and to Gola by train.

Dewali is the festival of lights. The word *Dewali* is a corruption of *Deepawali, deep* meaning a lamp. When Ram returned after 14 years of exile, his subjects welcomed him by lighting numerous earthen lamps in which *ghee* was used. Now people cannot afford *ghee* for all the lamps, and so they use mustard oil. A few *ghee* lamps are also lit and placed in temples and other places of worship. The festival falls on the last day of the first fortnight in *Kartik,* but festivities begin two days earlier on the day known as *Dhan Teras.* On this day some people have the custom of purchasing a metal vessel, for it is considered to be auspicious. *Dhan* means wealth, and *Dhan Teras* is a day meant for storing wealth, therefore all professionals—even thieves, dacoits and gamblers—think it good to start their business on this day. It is an auspicious day for magicians and sorcerers also.

The next day is *Choti Dewali.* At night two lamps are placed at the entrance of each house. The day is spent in the fields, and the night is the occasion for riotous gambling. The actual festival of *Dewali* is on the following day. On this day, known as *Bari Dewali* people have to work in the fields for it is the time for sowing the *Rabi* crop. The women prepare *pakka* food in the evening. Just as darkness comes on, the male members of all castes carry burning torches of dry maize stalks to a waste land, and throw them there. These dry stalks, known as *Allai Ballai,* are deposited to the east of the village by the higher castes, and by the other castes to the north. At the waste land they shout slogans in praise of the gods and goddesses. On their return they beat the *ghoora* (the place where cowdung and other rubbish used as manure is dumped) five or seven times with *lathis* and say *Ghoora Baba Jaago.*

The act of taking the *Allai Ballai* outside the village represents the cleaning of the village of all evil.

In every house earthen lamps, or *delis* as they are called, are lit. The *delis* are filled with mustard oil, and a piece of twisted cloth serves as a wick. They are placed in every part of the house and also at the *Ghoora*. *Ghee* lamps are placed in temples. Thakurs leave five or seven *ghee* lamps in the graveyards also.

Formerly the day was not marked with the worship of any deity; but the Banias or money-lenders used to worship Laxmi, the goddess of wealth on this occasion, and now others have copied them. A few Thakur families worship the book and the pen on this day and do not use them the whole of the next day. At night, *kajal* (lamp black) is prepared and applied to the eyes of men. Late in the night people gamble for they believe that gambling on this occasion is auspicious, and whosoever wins on this day will never lose throughout the year.

Jam Ghat, on the day following *Bari Dewali*, is observed as a holiday. In the evening *Gobardhan* (cowdung cake) is made, on the apex of which seven *seenks* are fixed. *Seenk* is a kind of grass, used for making brooms. A *deli* is placed on the *Gobardhan*, which is fixed on to a door. This also is a day of gambling. With the exception of passing money while gambling, people generally avoid the giving or taking of money or any articles on this day.

The next day is *Bhaiya Dooj*, when the girls perform the *Rochna* ceremony for the welfare and good health of their brothers. This ceremony is performed in the following manner. A girl applies *teeka* on the forehead of her brother with turmeric, and a few grains of rice are stuck on to it. She offers him *choora* and sweets. The brother gives her some money in return. Five or six years ago the Ahirs used to observe the *Daang* ceremony, in which a pig was placed in the midst of a herd of buffaloes; with the loud beating of drums and the clamorous sounding of other musical instruments, the animals were worked up to such a frenzy that they charged at the pig and trampled it to death. For this amusement permission had to be obtained from the police authorities, but this pastime has now been stopped altogether. After *Bhaiya Dooj*, the *Dewali* festival also comes to an end.

Festival days are regarded as auspicious days. If, however,

a death takes place in the family on such a day, the festival is not observed by the family in the years to come. It is considered to be *khota*. Should, however, a son be born in that family on that day in any future year, the taint of *khot* (inauspiciousness) is removed, and the celebration of the festival is resumed.

Off and on *Katha* ceremonies are held in the village. The *Katha* is the story of Satya Narain narrated in five parts. When one wishes to have a *Katha* ceremony, he arranges it in his home and invites the Pandit to recite the *Katha*. Hearing of *Katha* is considered to be a religious duty, but despite this there is no universal attendance due to personal rivalries. It is beneath the dignity of the Pandit to enter the house of a Chamar, so when a Chamar arranges a *Katha* ceremony, it is held at one of the *deothans*, generally at that of Durga Devi.

An image of Satya Narain is placed on a wooden *chowki* which is decorated with banana leaves. Five pots of water are placed on the platform, one in each corner and one in the centre. The one who arranges the recital of the *Katha* or an elderly member of the family fasts and sits facing the image. He offers water or grains of rice to the image as directed by the Pandit. The image faces south. A diagram representing *Navagraha* (nine stars which guide the destiny of mortals) is made of wheat flour before the image and pulses are placed on it. In front of the image is a copper plate with rice, wheat flour kneaded and moulded into small shapes, flowers, red thread, betel-nuts, vermilion and an earthen saucer full of water, with a red thread tied round it.

The *Katha* is recited by a Pandit, but as T. P. Shukla, one of the Pandits, is illiterate he reads it in a sing-song manner, muttering the Sanskrit couplets. At places he only produces vague sounds, because he is unable to read the couplets. Sometimes Guru Maharaj of Hirduna comes with his son, and he recites the *Katha* in an attractive manner. His voice is loud and clear. To enhance the beauty of the recital, his son plays on the harmonium.

After each of the five parts of the story conch-shells are blown and bells rung. At the end of the *Katha* a *bhajan* is sung, then *arti* is performed which is followed by another devotional song, at the end of which a copper plate is sent round in which the people drop a copper coin or two each. This goes to the Pandit. The

14 nP placed on the *Navagraha* are also collected by him. Out of the *prasad* offered by the Pandit to the god a good deal is taken by him as his share. After *pooja, prasad* is distributed to all the people. Chamar are given *prasad* after all the others have had their share. Before giving *prasad*, *charnamrit* is also distributed.

The water used in a Chamar *Katha* ceremony is fetched by a Nai who gets 12 nP and one *seedha*. A Kumhar brings the five earthen pots of water which are to be placed on the platform He is given 6 nP and one *seedha*. The *pattals* (leaves for eating out of) are supplied by a Pasi, who also gets 6 nP and one *seedha*. The one who lights the *Holi* fire at the *Holi* festival gets something at all *Katha* ceremonies.

The Pandit has to apply the *teeka* on the forehead of the person sitting facing the image but, mindful of his social standing, he does not apply the *teeka* on a Chamar's forehead. So the Chamar has to do it himself.

It has for long been the custom that when a Chamar decides to have the *Katha* he holds a feast for all his caste members. This is not so among the Thakur and Ahir who could afford to hold such a feast. The pockets of a Chamar are generally empty, but when he arranges a *Katha* ceremony he dare not go against the traditional custom and earn the displeasure of the village. So he prudently does not arrange for too many of these ceremonies. But among the other castes, especially Thakur and Ahir, *Katha* is recited often.

This chapter will not be complete if the part that religion plays in sickness is not considered properly. Small-pox is a disease which rages virulently in many parts of India, and Mohana does not escape its clutches. An epidemic broke out in the village in May 1955. The District Health authorities took measures to check the advance of the disease. Vaccinators visited the village twice, but the response from the villagers was very poor. Only about 15 or 20 came forward to be vaccinated. The people believe that small-pox is the expression of the anger of Seetla Maharani, and vaccination cannot appease the divine wrath. When a person is affected by small-pox they say he is affected by the Maharani. The *Pradhan* or head of the Gram Sabha whose duty it is to inform the medical authorities of the outbreak of diseases in the village was very slack about it because he is also

guided by the superstitious beliefs prevalent in the village. The belief that small-pox is the outcome of the Maharani's anger is further strengthened by the fact that sometimes vaccinated people also fall a prey to the disease.

When there is a case of small-pox in a family, one of the parents, generally the mother, offers water both in the morning and evening to the goddess Seetla at her *deothan*. The mother offers water after a bath and dressed in a wet *dhoti*. Water is offered to other deities also, such as Bhooian Devi and Kali Devi. As long as the disease remains in the family, no member has his hair or beard shaved. Clothes are not sent for washing. Vegetables are not cooked in kettles or saucepans. Oil or *ghee* is not used for cooking any food. No articles in the house are given to others and as far as possible the family members do not go out to other places. If they are forced to visit anyone, they always return home for the night.

The patient is not allowed to go out of the house. The place where he sleeps is cleaned morning and evening and whenever possible the floor is plastered with clay. Great emphasis is laid on cleanliness but they do not look upon the disease as a contagious one. Anyone can visit the patient but the visitor must remove his shoes before entering the house.

The patient is not permitted to scratch the pocks, because it would enrage the Maharani further. A green twig of neem leaves is used to soothe the itching sensation. The *mali* brings flowers daily to be offered to the Devi. When the patient recovers the *mali* gets one *seedha* and some money. All the villagers contribute some money to arrange a dance to please the goddess. The Pasi are sent to collect the money from every house and a common *pooja* is performed. Sometimes the dance is arranged only by members of the afflicted family.

When the disease is on the decline, the ceremony of *cheent* (sprinkling of water) is performed. *Pakka* food is prepared and seven virgins are fed, and then they return to the normal routine of life.

It is a common custom for the villagers to call in witch-doctors to treat bites of snakes or other poisonous insects. These witch-doctors are summoned in times of certain diseases also. The witch doctors, or *sayanas* or *ojhas* as they are called, are supposed

to have the power of invoking the gods and spirits, and thus they get supernatural power to cure diseases, draw out the poison, etc.

The *sayanas* are found only among the Chamar and Pasi castes. But people of all castes seek their aid when necessary. There are 13 *sayanas* in the village. These *sayanas* fall into two groups, viz., full-fledged *sayanas* or *pass sayanas* as the villagers call them and *na pass sayanas* or those under training. Of the 13 *sayanas*, six are *pass sayanas* and seven are *na pass sayanas*. A *na pass sayana* cannot invoke a god or a spirit. D. Chamar is the *guru* or master of all the *sayanas*.

When one is desirous of learning the art of invocation he approaches a *pass sayana*, generally the *guru*. The *pass sayana* gives his *mantras* to the trainee who recites them to himself. On festival days the *nagahar* (a brass plate) is played. It is kept on an enchanted place and all the *pass* and *na pass sayanas* sit round it. One of them gently strikes the plate with a silver coin and this is called playing the *nagahar*. The *sayanas* then try to invoke the spirits. The *nagahar* is played to cure diseases. *Jamghat*, the day after the *Dewali* festival, is supposed to be the most suitable day for invoking spirits or gods. When a student *sayana* is able to invoke a god or a spirit before a *nagahar* he is supposed to have harnessed the powers of the spirits and he becomes a *pass sayana*. The spirit invoked is believed to come to the person of the *sayana* invoking it. A *sayana* possessed of a spirit behaves in a manner which is impossible for any man not so possessed. Sometimes he lies flat on the earth and his eyes turn red. He makes a horrible noise. Sometimes it looks as though he has had an attack of convulsions. At times he is able to devour an enormous quantity of food, far beyond what an ordinary man can eat.

When a *na pass sayana* is endowed with the powers of a mature *sayana*, he offers a present to his teacher as remuneration. The present generally is a goat, which is offered to Bhooian. Its meat is distributed among the villagers, the *sayana* taking the lion's share.

The deities that are commonly invoked are Mahori, Kunwar Khayla and Bhooian. No god can digest as much poison as Mahori can. He relishes it and this is helpful in curing snake bites. The spirits invoked by the *ojhas* are known as *Marohas*.

Often they come of their own accord. The common belief is that these *Marohas* do not allow the gods to come and only those who are able to please the *Marohas* can be said to have the power of invoking gods. C. Chamar who became a *pass sayana* this year had an experience in which a *Maroha* would not allow the god to possess the *sayana*. C. Chamar then offered a goat to the spirit, who, after receiving it, allowed the god to come. It is said that old people who die after a prolonged illness become such *Marohas*. In their old age their love of possessions is so intense that after death their restless spirits frequent the places where they lived. Sometimes they are helpful to human beings, but often they tease and worry the people. Such *Marohas* are exorcised off the human body with the help of gods. However, both spirits and gods are invoked to cure people. When a *sayana* is possessed of a spirit or a god it is believed that whatever the *sayana* says or does is said or done by the spirit or the god, and not by the *sayana*.

When a person is bitten by a snake, the *sayanas* are informed. Every *sayana* whose help is asked for must respond to the call or else he is in danger of losing his powers of invocation. With *mantras* the *sayanas* try to check the poison from spreading. The patient is made to lie down and a *sayana* touches the bitten spot with a pebble and chants some *mantras*. Then he touches almost all parts of the body with the pebble, for there is a belief that wherever the pebble touches the body a barrier is created and the poison cannot cross it. The *nagahar* is also played. The time of playing the *nagahar* depends upon the type of snake that bit the man. If it is a very poisonous snake, the *nagahar* is played at first. Otherwise it is played after the *mantras* are chanted and the body is touched with the pebble. The *nagahar* is played near the head of the patient. The *sayanas* surround the patient and chant *mantras*. Each *sayana* invokes a particular god. The *na pass sayanas* also chant *mantras* in the hope of invoking a spirit or a god. When a god comes, he is requested to extract the poison from the body. Different devices are used to draw out the poison. Some *sayanas* use a stick to draw out the poison. Some use a thread. One end of the thread touches the wound, and the other end is held by the *sayana*. The poison, it is believed, flows from the patient through the thread to the *sayana*—not to the *sayana*

himself but to the god who possesses him. Some others use an iron rod instead of the thread. Still others use a green twig of the *neem* tree. The last is used in a different manner. The twig is tenderly moved on the body from head to foot. Thus all the poison comes to the feet from where it flows out, or rather the god consumes it, as the villagers believe. Sometimes the quantity of the poison exceeds the god's consumption capacity. In such a case, the *sayana* whom the god possessed falls down unconscious. Then the other *sayanas* call upon their gods to cure the afflicted *sayana*.

Sometimes, when a man is bitten by a snake in the morning, he gets the flow of the poison stopped by a *sayana* and goes to work, for he cannot afford to stay idle. When the day's work is over, the *sayanas* gather to cure him. Throughout the day the patient has a burning sensation in his body but nothing else.

Forgetting the *mantras* while invoking a god is dangerous for the *sayana*, for the god concerned loses his temper and attacks the invoker. A *sayana* can treat the bites of insects, cold, fever and any disease caused by the evil eye.

To arrange a *nagahar*, one has to spend Rs. 1.25. This money is spent in purchasing *prasad*. Usually they purchase *batashas* and *revdis* (sweet preparations). Liquor is also offered to the gods. The *sayanas* do not charge anything for their services.

The sorcerers, apart from using their magic powers to cure some people, may use it to harm others either because of some personal grievance or for the sake of the money offered. Of two such malevolent practices the villagers are aware. One is *Moonth*. *Moonth* is the name of a god, and the rituals connected with the harnessing of *Moonth's* powers are called *Moonth Jagana* (invocation of the *Moonth*). The term *Moonth* is also applied to the contents of the *Moonth* plate. The *Moonth* plate is a large hollow earthen plate and it contains the following:

1. Flowers
2. A small earthen lamp
3. A few knives, daggers or other small, sharp weapons
4. A phial of scent
5. One lemon
6. The heart of an unmarried girl

The magicians secure the last item by keeping close watch on the village burial ground. When the corpse of an unmarried girl is buried, the sorcerers unearth the body and take out the heart for the *Moonth*. The *Moonth* relishes it.

A sorcerer intending to kill a person invokes *Moonth*, and the god carries the *Moonth* plate with all its contents to the person whom the sorcerer intends to kill. When it reaches the victim, the entire contents of the plate are thrown over the head of the person who dies immediately from injury caused by the weapons which pierce his head. Even if the victim is not at home the *Moonth* searches him out and kills him. The god drinks the blood of the victim and is satisfied.

At times it happens that the victim is himself a magician, and he is able to send the *Moonth* back to the sender to satisfy its thirst for blood. Hence in order to safeguard themselves, the sorcerers keep a knife, a lemon, some scent and some flowers with them. If the *Moonth* comes back they pierce their thighs and offer their blood to it, to satisfy its thirst, and also give the flowers, scent and lemon to pacify it. Sometimes they offer a goat or a sheep instead of their blood. Still others offer neither their blood nor an animal's but instruct the *Moonth* to attack anybody it meets on the way. Thus the thirst for blood is quenched and the sender is saved. Those who are of a gentle nature and who know the art of pacifying the *Moonth*, do so by chanting *mantras* and then it asks for no blood.

The *Moonth* is always invoked at midnight and it makes a sort of humming noise which only experienced magicians or saintly men can distinguish. Ganga Baba, the devout man, whose spirit still sheds benevolence on the village, was once able to save the life of his Chamar servant from a *Moonth*. Ganga Baba was usually out of bed very early in the morning. One day at 5 a.m., as he went out of the house, he heard the sound of *Moonth*. He divined that the god had come to attack his Chamar servant. Ganga Baba pacified it by chanting *mantras* and threw the *Moonth* plate and its contents into the Bari Taal, thus saving the life of his servant.

The other malevolent practice is *Chor Vidya* (the art of theft). This so-called art is not learnt in the way arts are usually learnt.

One gets it by invoking spirits. The method of invocation is as follows.

The sorcerers who wish to attain this power first get hold of the skull of a *Teli* who died on a Sunday. On a Tuesday the magician boils rice in that skull. While the rice is being boiled, *mantras* are chanted and spirits invoked. At midnight the rice is taken to a *peepul* tree on which a Brahma Dev (ghost of a Brahmin) resides. The boiled rice is thrown on the trunk of the tree. The rice sticks to the trunk and when collected turns into a stick, which when thrown on the ground becomes a snake. In the act of throwing the rice on to the tree, some of it falls on the ground. The thieves collect this and take it with them and they also take the 'stick' (formed by the rice thrown on the tree). When they reach the house which they intend robbing, they throw the rice into the house, and all the inmates are overcome by sleep and sometimes they even become unconscious. The thieves then draw lines on a wall with the 'stick'. It is said that the parts marked by the 'stick' become weak, and can be easily broken. This enables the thieves to get into the house without any trouble.

Formerly there were two Chamar in the village who knew the arts of *Moonth* and *Chor Vidya,* but J. N. Das, who later became a *sadhu,* beat them out of the village. Since then there has been no one here with a knowledge of these nefarious arts. A. Singh, a prominent villager, said that these were true arts, but have died down due to lack of true and expert exponents. He called those people imposters who still claim to possess these powers. R. Singh spent much money on such sorcerers to kill D. P. of the village Kutwa, but none of them could send the *Moonth* to D. P. It is alleged by some that ultimately R. Singh himself murdered D. P.

A. Singh gave another amusing incident in which a Chamar posed as a magician. One day he behaved in a strange manner, pretending to be possessed of a god. His neighbour, a Thakur, who had no faith in the invocation of gods, watching all this, got on to the roof of the Chamar's house and poured water. The Chamar immediately claimed that it was his god which revealed its presence by throwing divine water. All the Chamar who had gathered there bent down and touched the water with their foreheads. The

Thakur, still standing on the roof, could not tolerate the folly any more. He jumped on the Chamar and beat him severely. Later he related the whole affair to the Chamars, who joined him and laughed at the imposter.

HEALTH AND HYGIENE

Fits. Ordinarily the villagers cannot distinguish between the different kinds of fits. When fits are frequent, they are thought to be the workings of an evil spirit. As a preventive measure, the villagers get amulets from the *ojhas*. They go to doctors only when all other methods have failed. When a person has an attack of fits and is unconscious, the *ojhas* chant *mantras* and shout into the ears of the unconscious person. When the patient regains consciousness the *ojhas* claim to have cured him. As fits are supposed to be caused by spirits, it is taken for granted that doctors cannot do anything about it, for they are helpless against diseases and ailments caused by ghosts and spirits.

Epilepsy. It has been noticed that attacks of epilepsy are common when the easterly winds blow. Again, the belief is that spirits are the cause of these fits, and so only magical rites are performed to cure one of epilepsy. The wife of Janki Pasi is subject to epileptic fits. Both Janki Pasi and his wife go to village Bhika Nau to make offerings at the grave of *Pirji* (a Muslim *fakir*), which is supposed to be a sacred place. About ten years ago an epileptic patient died in the village. She was drawing water when she became unconscious and fell into the well, dying instantaneously.

Native remedies used in the village for different diseases are as follows:

Malaria:	a decoction of *tulsi* leaves or tea to which a little ginger is added.
Dysentery:	curd with a little salt and mint.
Cholera:	onion juice.
Heat stroke:	juice of green mangoes.

For gastric troubles the villagers get help from *ojhas*, for they know no native remedies for this ailment.

Some patent medicines, such as Paludrine and Anacin for malaria, and 'Amrat Dhara' for cholera, have been introduced into the village by a doctor living in Kutwa. There is no qualified doctor in Mohana, though S. P. Shukla, who was a compounder in the army has a stock of medicines with him, so when the villagers resort to modern treatment they approach the doctor in Kutwa, or take the patient to Lucknow. Some of the villagers go in for ayurvedic treatment also if they can afford it.

11. Communication

THE VILLAGE Mohana is eight miles from Lucknow city, connected to the city with two miles of *kachcha* road and six miles of metalled road. However, Mohana is still a secluded place, and the villager lives 'far from the madding crowds' of the city. To many of them, Mohana is almost their whole world.

VISITORS FROM OUTSIDE

Yet contacts with city-life are not wholly absent. There are a few people who have to visit the village officially, and from them the villagers gather a great deal of information on varied subjects. Any government information with which the villagers should be acquainted is taken to them by the *Lekhpal* or *Patwari*. If there are changes in the land tax or some announcements regarding government property, it is the *Lekhpal's* duty to impart the information to the villagers. It was he who told them of the Government Scheme of consolidating land-holdings, explained to them what it was, and enumerated its advantages. Besides such official information, the *Lekhpal* further furnishes them with other bits of news that he gathers in the city. Then there are also the tax-collectors from the Tehsil (including the *Lekhpal*) and from the District Board, who have a fund of interesting information for the villagers about the happenings in their respective places. The postman is a very rare visitor to the village, for even when there are letters to be delivered, he sends them through the Mohana boys studying at the neighbouring Higher Secondary School. Gambling, quarrelling, stealing—these are common vices in the village, and so the police make their appearance there sometimes. They arrest the offenders, or sometimes punish them on the spot, but no matter how angry they are, they are always in a mood for conversation, and the villagers gather around to listen to what they have to say. Once every two years toddy-contractors go to the village, and

news passes from them to the villagers. There is Dr. M. who still has a soft corner in his heart for the villagers, and they look forward to his visits. He tells the villagers how to treat some of the ailments from which they suffer and talks on general topics too. There are also other Health and Medical personnel, who visit the village to carry out their duties there. Last, but not the least, there are the investigators of the Department of Anthropology of the Lucknow University. To smother the suspicion the villagers have about people who inquire about their families and lands and to establish a friendly relationship with them, the investigators have had to talk on various topics of interest to the villagers. Every time they went to the village, they had something interesting and exciting to tell the villagers.

CONTACTS MADE BY THE VILLAGERS

Some of the villagers go to Lucknow daily. A few are employed there, a few others take milk to Lucknow for sale. There are others whose visits to the city, though not daily, are frequent. The Dhobi have a few clients there, and those who have shops go to Lucknow and Amarpur markets to purchase goods. All these people, while chiefly concerned with their work, glean all sorts of information from the people with whom they come in contact. *Melas* (fairs), markets, wrestling bouts—in fact gatherings of any sort—are all occasions of fact and fiction passing from mouth to mouth. Marriage parties from Mohana to other places, and *vice versa*, are frequent. At the annual *Holi* celebrations the Thakur from nine other villages also assemble to wish one another a happy *Holi*. Amidst such rejoicings information, valuable or otherwise, is acquired and also passed on.

Among others who figure prominently in the dissemination of news and ideas are the students at the Higher Secondary School. Close to the school is another village where a National Extension Service Centre is functioning. When the boys return to the village after school, they tell the villagers not only of what they were taught at school, but also of the tractors and other agricultural equipments which they see at the N.E.S. Centre. One day one of the teachers at the school went to the class with the convocation

gown which became the talk of the village. At Agrahara (seven miles from Mohana) is a small fountain pen factory, and the students of the school often go there to purchase fountain pens. Gopala, the owner of the factory, is a widely travelled man, and the students listen to him with great interest. Gopala is a relative of Parag Lohar of Mohana. So Parag also visits him often.

Those taken into police custody know something about the punishments meted out to offenders, identification parades and how they are carried out, and bribery and corruption among the police officials. When a villager is arrested, those who have been arrested before advise him as to how he will be questioned and how he should answer the questions.

CENTRES OF INFORMATION IN THE VILLAGE

The *Pradhan* of the Gram Sabha is the administrative authority of the village. The *Lekhpal* takes all the government orders first to the *Pradhan*. Then there is the *Sarpanch* of the *Adalti panchayat*, who is the judicial head and has a knowledge of the various quarrels and how they were settled. He knows the working of the *panchayat*. A *chaukidar* is employed by the police on Rs. 5 a month, and it is his duty to inform the police of any serious quarrels in the village. He keeps a record of all the births and deaths in the village. He informs the *Pradhan* of new entries in the records.

There are a few villagers who by virtue of having done a bit of travelling are looked upon as possessing more knowledge than the others. P. Shukla was a compounder in the army during the Second World War, and even now he has a stock of medicines with him, and he advises the villagers about the treatment of various diseases. R. Singh has visited many places. He has been to Rampur (to take a dip in the Ganga) and to Sitapur (to attend the *Shiv Ratri* fair) several times. He has also been to Barabanki, Rai Bareli, Pratapgarh and Sultanpur with marriage parties and to Gonda on personal business. He goes to Lucknow almost every week, sometimes oftener, to make purchases of victuals and other articles, and sells them in the village. He has passed the Hindi Upper Middle Examination. A. Singh has been only to Kanpur,

Barabanki and Lucknow, but he likes to talk about himself and his adventures. Bux Singh is a widely travelled man and has been to many places outside India, for he was in the army. The brothers R. Singh and M. Singh were also enlisted soldiers. All these people still talk of the interesting adventures in which they were involved, and from them the villagers have heard about China, Russia, Japan, Turkey, England, America, Germany, France and Burma. The strange talk about these distant countries attracts everyone's attention, and the villagers talk about the 'noseless' or flat-nosed Chinese and the loquacious French. The villagers have heard about a few places of pilgrimage in India such as Hardwar, Prayag, Kashi, Kanpur, Neemsar, Gola Gokaran Nath, and Badrinath.

DISSEMINATION OF NEWS AND IDEAS WITHIN THE VILLAGE

Messengers. The villagers cling to the old method of sending messages through messengers, the messengers employed being Nai and Pasi. Messages to neighbouring villages and even to Lucknow are sent this way. Quite often the Nai is instrumental in settling marriages, especially among the Thakur, for he is sent round to look out for suitable brides and grooms. The services of the Nai are required for sending messages regarding ceremonies connected with birth, *mundan,* marriage and death. Notices about *panchayat* meetings are also sent round through Nais. A Pasi is also deputed to convey messages regarding child-birth, *mundan* and marriage, but he never carries messages of death and ceremonies associated with death. Apart from messages pertaining to ceremonies and rituals, confidential messages and documents are also sent through Pasi, for they are trustworthy people. Letters containing urgent messages to places outside Mohana are never posted, as the villagers are not sure when the letter would reach its destination. In fact they are not sure whether it would reach its destination at all. Usually a member of the family himself goes to convey urgent and important messages, and when this is not possible, a Pasi is despatched instead. The messenger goes on foot or on a bicycle.
Conversation. Conversation is the common way by which the exchange of ideas and information takes place. Any fresh topic is

sure to be discussed at the evening gatherings. Topic after topic is taken up, one topic leading to another in the course of the conversation. For instance, when the boys studying at Bakshi-ka-Talab related the incident of one of their teachers having come to class in his convocation gown, all those present were greatly amused and listened to the boys with interest; then one of the villagers who had been in the army talked of the dress of the Burmese. Discussion about a quarrel in the village leads to a talk about the police, chiefly about their inefficiency and their eagerness to accept bribes. Then it leads to the stringent financial position of the villagers, and so on. Young and old alike take part in these conversations. The teacher of the village primary school talks on many interesting subjects. Agricultural taxes, politics, modern trends in food and dress, cinema shows, religious festivals and ceremonies—a variety of topics are all touched upon, sometimes seriously, more often lightly. The Congress Government, tax collectors, police, village leaders, *panchayat* members, no one is spared; all are judged and criticised by the villagers. Conversations on these topics are not confined to the evening gatherings alone. Anywhere and at any time that two or more people get together there is some topic of common interest to them. Man must talk and talk he does, at times too often and too much. The villager is no exception.

Katha ceremonies. These are means whereby religious values are sought to be imparted to the villagers. The *Katha* of Satya Narain (the true god) is a collection of many short stories dealing with the lives of people who worshipped him and also with the lives of those who neglected his worship. Each story has one or more morals in it. Three of these stories are given below:

1. Once a Bania went outside the country in the interests of his business, and after a time returned with two boat-loads of diamonds and gold and silver ornaments, worth several lakhs of rupees. When he neared the shore, Satya Narain himself went to him in the guise of a *Sadhu*, and asked him for alms. The Bania, unwilling to part with even a little bit of his wealth, replied that he had no money to give, and that in his boats there was only worthless material. The *Sadhu* went away saying, 'As you say.' When the Bania looked into his collection of wealth, he found that

the diamonds, and gold and silver had all turned into worthless stuff, fit only to be thrown away. The Bania then went in search of the *Sadhu* and found him sitting under a tree near by, and requested him to restore his wealth, promising that he would never again utter a lie or be so miserly. The *Sadhu* granted him his request and the Bania got back his wealth.

2. This same Bania was not blessed with any children, and one day he made a vow that if his wife bore him a child, he would perform a *pooja* to Satya Narain. In course of time, his wife gave birth to a girl. When he was reminded of his promise to perform the *pooja* to Satya Narain, he said that he would fulfil the promise when the daughter was married. Years passed by and the daughter was married, but there were no signs of the Bania performing the *pooja*. His son-in-law was now his partner in business and they both went on a business tour. On the way they were arrested on a charge of theft. The Bania's wife remembered the promise and performed the *pooja* to Satya Narain, and consequently her husband and son-in-law were released.

3. A king was returning home dead tired from a chase. He rested under a tree for a while. At a distance, the Ahir of the village were offering *pooja* to Satya Narain. Seeing their king, they first gave him the *prasad*, but he would not accept it because it was given by Ahir who were not his equals but lower in social status. He left the *prasad* under the tree and went home, but when he reached home he found that all his hundred sons were dead and his property was destroyed. He realised it was a result of divine wrath. So he went back to the place where *pooja* was performed and took the *prasad*. When he went home now, he found all his sons restored to life again and his property intact.

Many such stories are recited, but it is doubtful whether the *Katha* ceremonies have any reformative value in the village. The villagers enjoy the stories all right, but the moral of it fails to arrest their attention; at any rate they do not realise that they should put these morals into practice. Many of these villagers do not know the aim of the *Katha* ceremonies, for they believe that if they are present at the recital, they have performed their duty. Merely listening to the *Katha* is taken as performing a *punya karya* (a good deed), and is looked upon as a sort of 'pass-

port' to *Swarg* (heaven). So, one can, without exaggeration, say that *Katha* ceremonies in the village do not serve their real purpose.

Education. The Primary School of Mohana owes its existence to the kindness of the ex-zamindar of the village who donated his newly built house to the villagers for use as a school. To pay the teacher the villagers had to contribute a little, and the zamindar gave the rest. By and by the school was recognised by the District Board. Now there are two teachers working in the school. In the history of the school, there have been times when it has not functioned well, but at present it is run smoothly and efficiently. Hindi, Arithmetic, History, Geography and Nature Study are taught in the school. Games are a part of the regular school routine. *Bhajans* and *keertans* are organised on Saturday afternoons by the school-teacher. Further, the children are taught cleanliness, tidiness, honesty and punctuality. The children who attend school are supposed to cultivate these good habits. Some of the boys, after finishing their education at the Primary School in the village, join the Higher Secondary School at the neighbouring village where they develop a broader outlook. It is generally seen that boys studying at the school are better behaved than those who are not and it is hoped that they will have a good influence in the village. However, the attitude of the villagers, particularly the higher castes, has to change, before any substantial good can come out of education.

ATTITUDE OF THE VILLAGERS TOWARDS EDUCATION AND OTHER MODERN AMENITIES

Education. When the Primary School was started in 1942, there were only ten boys attending it. From the very beginning, the higher castes were opposed to the establishment of the school. They do not want their children to study, and neither do they wish the low-caste children to attend the school. There were and there still are several reasons for their aversion to education.

Before the abolition of Zamindari, the Thakur were rich, and there was no need for the Thakur boys to study. They had not to

hunt for jobs, for they were amply provided for. All that they were supposed to learn was to extract labour from the low-caste people and collect taxes from the tenants. Besides, the general belief was that once the boys received education, they would become 'dandies' acquiring all the vagaries and caprices of the degenerated city youth, and would help their families neither in the house nor in the field. Further, the Thakur do not like their children to sit with the low-caste children. They were opposed to low-caste children studying because they realised that education would improve their status, and consequently would claim equality with the higher castes. They are still opposed to education, mainly for the last-mentioned reason. The Brahmin also oppose it because it would bring about equality of all castes.

Some of the lower caste people did not like to send their boys to school because their help was wanted in the field or at home. Often, little boys of six and seven years have to go out to work and earn something to help the family. Others, like the Dhobi, felt that education would not in any way be useful for their children who would finally have to turn to their caste-profession.

But on the whole the lower castes favour education, because they realise that it would help them to shake off the aggressive tendencies of the Thakur and others who exploit them. The local money-lenders contributed to a consciousness of the benefits of education in no small measure. Their exorbitant and fleecing rates of usury made the villagers desperate. The high rate of interest which increased according to the wishes of the money-lenders kept the illiterate debtor at the creditor's mercy, since he never knew what was being entered in the accounts. Often enough, the poor debtor would toil and slave and save enough to pay off the debt, only to find that the amount of debt had mysteriously doubled or trebled itself. The debtors are seldom given a receipt for the amount paid, on the plea that they are illiterate. This makes them favour education. They are eager to educate their children to be able to keep a better account of loans and re-payments, if nothing else. The same argument holds good in the matter of paying taxes. Then, those who could read and write got employment in cities easily. These instances speak in favour of education and the number of low-caste children in the school is increasing rapidly.

The standard of a boy's performance in school depends to a great extent on the attitude of his guardians towards education. Of the few high-caste schoolboys, many are indifferent to what is taught in school, and some are 'pronounced dunces'. But the low-caste children are industrious and diligent, and naturally their performance is good. The pity is that many of the low-caste boys cannot join the Higher Secondary School due to economic reasons.

The villagers think that girls do not need education, the argument being that sooner or later they will marry and settle down in their homes, and any knowledge they receive of History or Geography will be a mere waste. The villagers opine that it is enough for a girl to learn to read and write, so that she can read and write letters if the necessity arises.

The Postal Service. The villagers show no appreciation of the postal service. They rarely receive letters and money-orders find their way into the village only once in a blue moon. The general feeling is that the postal service is very unreliable and means a great deal of unnecessary delay. There is truth in what the villagers say, for once a letter reached the village two months after its despatch, when it should have reached its destination the next day. However, the main reason for the villagers' dislike of the postal service is their illiteracy. They have to find a literate person to get their letters read or written. If the message to be sent is confidential, it involves greater difficulties. The roundabout way in which a confidential letter is dictated and written results in a message becoming totally different from the one intended. Similarly, there is hesitation in getting one's letters read by someone else, if one expects confidential messages in them. So the villagers stick to the old methods of sending messengers or taking the messages themselves and resort to the postal service only when the distance is very great.

Radio. There is demand for a radio in the village. The demand is more vocal and persistent among those who have listened to the *panchayat ghar* programme of the Lucknow station of A. I. R. Those who have been to film shows in Lucknow are also keen to have a radio set in the village for they know that film songs are relayed particularly by Radio Ceylon. Though the demand is

great, no one is prepared to take up the responsibility of looking after the radio set, if installed in the village. Even the *Sarpanch* is not willing to shoulder this responsibility. So the idea of asking the government to have a set installed in the village was dropped.

Newspapers. Newspapers are not popular among the villagers, and even if they were supplied to them free of cost, they would not benefit them. One reason for this unpopularity of newspapers is the illiteracy of the villagers. If one reads out the news to them they listen, but that too only for a short while. There is so much work to be done that they cannot afford to waste their precious time in such 'trash' (so it appears to them). One of the investigators of the Department of Anthropology used to read out the papers to them sometimes. The first day, there were many people sitting round him, then as days passed by their interest ebbed, and the investigator had to give up reading the papers to them. S. Singh, an employee at the Chief Court in Lucknow, attributed the villagers' apathy to news to its strangeness. They do not understand it and do not believe anything of it. Most of the items seem to them to be the same or similar. After all, what does it matter to them what happens elsewhere ? Leave alone the far-off countries of America, England, Russia or China ; what happens in Bombay or Delhi or Madras does not interest them. They know nothing about *Border Incidents*, *Kashmir Problem* or *Goa*. Their world is small and their horizon limited.

URBAN CONTACTS

Advantages and disadvantages. If the newspapers speak of something that happened in Burma, the villagers are not interested, but when a person who has been to Burma tells them something about that country, they listen with great interest. The villagers learn not by reading, but by listening. Thus city dwellers who visit the village, and villagers who visit the city, play the chief role in broadening the outlook of the villagers. To increase contacts with the city, bicycles have come as a boon, and they are the only means whereby the villagers can get to Lucknow quickly, other alternatives being walking or going in the melon carts. But contacts with the city, besides serving a good purpose, have

also a baneful influence on the villagers. The young men are always waiting for an opportunity to see a film, and many of the films, we feel, are not only useless, but even harmful to the simple villager. Losing faith in God, blindly adopting the dress and styles of the city people, and squandering their wealth on worthless stuff are a few of the other evils of urban influence. Thus to a villager, gaining knowledge means also losing one's character; hence some villagers would rather be ignorant.

POLITICAL AFFILIATIONS

During the last general elections, the villagers supported the Congress, and Jodh Singh, one of the prominent villagers, claims to have composed a poem urging the villagers to cast their vote in favour of the Congress candidate. A rough translation of the poem is as follows:

Do not give your vote to Bhaiyaji,
The rightful owner of it is Gopiji.
Bhaiyaji is running a big show
Trying to tempt everyone
But he takes bribes in secret from the Zamindars
And lets the throats of the villagers be cut—
So, don't give your vote to Bhaiyaji,
The rightful owner of it is Gopiji.

If you give your vote to Bhaiyaji
He will become the Chairman of the District Board
And then he will tax each and every one
But if you give your vote to Gopiji
He will become the Chairman of the District Board
And will help all without discrimination—
So, don't give your vote to Bhaiyaji,
The rightful owner of it is Gopiji.

Go to the polling booths in Bhaiyaji's car,
Eat the sweetmeats of Bhaiyaji
But give your vote for the Congress nominee Gopinath

And don't forget him, when you cast your vote,
Because for your sake, Oh brother farmers!
He has been to prison
And suffered hardships in furthering your cause—
So, don't give your vote to Bhaiyaji,
The rightful owner of it is Gopiji.

Jodh Singh is of the opinion that many villagers voted for Gopinath because of his efforts and because of this poem.

Though the villagers voted for the Congress, some of them are by no means satisfied with the present government. Their complaint is that land taxes, revenue taxes and water taxes have been increased, but on the other hand the price of wheat has been cut with the result that the villagers are subject to economic hardships. They feel that the present government does nothing for their good but is only eager to levy more taxes. 'The Congress government must go; it does not matter which party comes into power, as long as it is not the Congress.' Even if the new party should prove worse than the Congress, the villagers will not vote Congress again. Such are the opinions expressed by some dissatisfied villagers. The fact is that the villagers know very little about the working of the present government but are critical of it due to certain reasons. (But all the same, they voted for the Congress.)

For one thing, this government brought about the Zamindari abolition and so the Thakur, who were prosperous land-owners, have a grudge against the government. The lower castes who profited by the Zamindari abolition are also not pleased with the government for the present tax-collectors are very strict, while in the older days the Zamindars were not so. Further, they feel that if the government could deprive the Thakur of their lands, it could very easily take away their lands too, and they look upon the government scheme of land consolidation as a step toward robbing them of their lands. In Zamindari days, the higher castes were very helpful to the lower castes in many ways, but it is not so now. Formerly, the Zamindars used to settle all disputes, and if anyone was arrested by the Police, the Zamindars spoke up for him and got him released. Now the *Panchayat* and Gram Sabha are dominated by the Thakur and they sometimes take an arrogant

attitude towards the lower castes. Further if any of the lower caste people is involved in a police case, the Thakur no longer help him.

The most bitter critic of the present government is a Pandit who attributes the present relaxation in intercaste relations to the Government policy. In his opinion deviation from the traditional caste rules is dangerous to the Hindu community. There are many others who feel that the government has no right to interfere with caste rules which have been framed by *Bhagwan* (God).

Comparing the present government with the British rule, some villagers say that under British regime they lived peacefully and the government did not interfere in their affairs unnecessarily. Further at the time of British rule, they say, justice was meted out with fairness and the wrong-doer was punished, but now, often the wrong-doer escapes and the innocent is punished, for there is much corruption and bribery among those in power. There are a few villagers who say that they would be happy if the British came back, for they say that there is no one in this country who is able to administer justice well.

'In the next elections we will vote for the American government,' said a villager once, and when it was pointed out to him that there will be no American candidate, he said, 'Then we will not vote for any party.' A foreign research scholar, who lived in the village, frequently doled out money to the villagers, so he was looked upon as a kind and generous man. Hence there are a few villagers who say that all foreigners are good and trustworthy, and prefer foreign rule to the present government. But opinions to the contrary are not lacking, for some say that the foreign scholar was generous only because he wanted some secret information from them, and that his countrymen are not to be trusted.

The villagers do not know anything about politics or government affairs or about the different forms of Government. Democracy, to them, is the same as Monarchy. Those who go to Lucknow have heard the names of the parties—Congress, Praja-Socialist, Communist, Jan Sangh—but they know nothing about the aims and objects of these parties. Villagers do realise the importance of elections, and know that they have the power to a certain

extent of selecting or rejecting those who are to be in authority. Social awareness has been increasing and the villagers today are becoming increasingly conscious of their political rights. The freedom with which some of the villagers express themselves show their dissatisfaction and their preferences augur well for the future of Indian democracy. Knowledge dispels ignorance, and education and ameliorative measures will help them to realise their ambition and improve their living standards.

12. Recreation

THERE ARE not very many organised pastimes or forms of recreation in the village. The fact is that the villagers are so busy eking out their meagre subsistence that they hardly have any leisure, and when they do have any free time they do not know how to utilise it to their advantage. Even the few rich villagers who do not have to work all day do not appear to turn their leisure to much advantage, but waste it in idle gossip, gambling, etc. No plays, dramas or dances are arranged so that any talents which the villagers might possess are latent. There are no means by which the hidden potentialities in them may be drawn out and expressed for the benefit of themselves and society.

The pastimes in which the villagers indulge are as follows.

In the previous chapter, we had referred to conversation as a means of communication. Conversation is a pastime with the villagers. Often on cold winter evenings people of all castes are seen sitting in groups round a fire and chatting on various subjects. Summer evenings are no exception. Some of them remain talking till late in the night. Young boys too sit with the men and join in the conversation, but women and girls are never seen in these groups. These gatherings are usually seen in front of the houses of prominent villagers such as the *Sarpanch.* Sometimes they gather under big trees.

The conversation is seldom intellectual or serious. It is never centred on the same topic for more than half an hour. The usual topics are the success or failure of crops, cattle, diseases, quarrels in the village, and so on. Any villager who goes to Lucknow collects the latest news in the city and it is shared with the other villagers in these evening talks. Sometimes stories are related. Scandals find quick circulation in these groups but always in a humorous way. Now and then during these informal talks transactions and litigations are settled. One or two in the group may be made fun of, and all including the victims enjoy the fun.

Thus the time is spent in a very light-hearted, though often useless manner.

GAMBLING

The villagers are very fond of gambling, and though many of them lose much money they persist in indulging in it. There have been times when the police raided gambling parties and took the players into custody, but no matter, the villagers will not put aside the games of stakes. On the occasion of *Dewali* gambling is very common. Children indulge in gambling at a very young age.

Nakki duaa. One of such games in which children delight is *Nakki duaa.* It is played by two children with small pebbles or seeds. A heap of these is placed in the centre, and then one takes a handful. He asks the other child to guess whether the number of seeds or pebbles taken out is odd or even. If the other guesses correctly he wins a pice from his opponent. Now it is the latter's turn to take out the pebbles and the former's to guess.

Guccho para. Children up to the age of 15 years play this game. It is played with marbles. Each child tries to throw as many marbles as he can into a small pit, standing at a certain distance away from it. The marbles are contributed by all the children. Each child claims as his own the marbles he succeeds in throwing into the pit. Sometimes coins are used instead of marbles. In such cases adults also take part.

Surbhagi. This game is very popular among the villagers. It is played by two people with 16 pawns each. This game is akin to draughts, but the pawns are not moved from square to square but from point to point along lines that are horizontal, vertical or diagonal. The one who loses the game loses some money also to the winner.

Card games. The villagers spend much of their leisure in playing cards, *coat piece* and *gunn* being their favourite games. Money is staked in these games also.

A. Singh is acquainted with a few cards tricks, and he entertains others by this means sometimes.

Draughts and Snakes and Ladders. One man in the village, namely

Din Shah, has a Draughts Board and a Snakes and Ladders Board. Besides Shah no one else in the village knows how to play these games, and he is careful that they do not learn the games for it gives him a feeling of importance to be the sole claimant of a knowledge of these two games. Respectable visitors from the city are however invited by Shah to play these games with him. He thus enjoys himself and provides amusement for the visitors who otherwise might find time hanging on their hands on a dull afternoon or a sultry evening.

PASTIMES IN WHICH SINGING PLAYS A PROMINENT ROLE

Alha singing. Alha and Udal were two brothers who lived in the time of King Pratvera Chauhan. They were noted for their chivalrous deeds. Jagnik wrote a book in the *Dingal* dialect entitled *Alhakhand* celebrating the courageous acts of the brothers. The book contained a number of songs. The original is not available, but it is available in three dialects—*Bundelkhandi*, *Rajasthani*, and *Oudhi*. In Uttar Pradesh the songs are sung in the *Oudhi* dialect. In most places competitions are arranged in singing these songs. However there is no such competition in Mohana because there is no renowned singer in the village. Even though competitions are not arranged, the villagers love to listen to the songs. It is a common sight in the rainy season to see a villager singing the songs out of a book, and a crowd of villagers, children and adults, around him. In some villages, though not in Mohana, the singing is accompanied with the beat of *dholak*.

Singing Bhajans and Keertans. Since 1955 Srinath Singh, the school-teacher, has arranged *keertan* and *bhajans* on every Saturday afternoon in view of which the children have only half-day school on Saturdays, for these *keertans* and *bhajans* are arranged mainly for children, though adults also take part in them. *Keertans* and *bhajans* are religious hymns sung to the accompaniment of musical instruments. Sometimes religious stories are related in this manner. The leader tells the story for some time, or rather he sings it by himself, and then the whole audience joins in singing a song, or singing the part of the story which has just been narrated

by the leader. Then the leader continues with the story, and there is singing by the audience again. Thus it goes on till the end of the story is reached. The programme usually begins and ends with a hymn of praise. *Bhajans* and *keertans* are organised on the occasion of many festivals.

Katha ceremonies. These have been described elsewhere. They form a good pastime for the villagers, besides imparting good values to them.

Antyakshari. This is a pastime of children. The children are divided into two equal groups, and they sit facing each other. A child from one group sings a song, and when he finishes a child from the other group sings a song, the first letter of which should be the one with which the former song ended. Then a child from the first group starts a song taking care to see that the first letter of his song is the same as the last letter of the song of the opposite side. The singing goes on till one party is unable to compete any longer. This is an exciting and interesting competitive pastime for the children. Such singing competitions are organised with school-children of the neighbouring villages also.

ATHLETIC PASTIMES

Wrestling. Wrestling bouts, or *dangal* as the local term goes, are organised well, and the villagers take a great interest in them. The wrestling season starts from *Sawan* (beginning of the monsoons) and ends in *Kuar* (beginning of winter). The main days on which these bouts are arranged are the festivals of *Nag Panchmi, Janmashtmi, Anant Chaudas, Kajri Teej, Shravani,* and *Har Chhat*. The bouts are held in Mohana as well as in all the neighbouring villages. No matter where they are held, the spectators turn out in large numbers. Funds are raised by the villagers to meet the expenses of organising the bout and getting prizes for the winners. Sometimes a little money comes from the village *panchayat*. Prizes vary according to the ability of the fighter. If the winner is a really good wrestler, he is given Rs. 15 and a turban. If he is mediocre, he gets from Rs. 5 to Rs. 10. In the case of children, the winner is given from Re. 1 to Rs. 3 and a turban or some sweets. No caste restrictions are observed in choosing the

combatants. All feelings of superiority and inferiority are laid aside, and a Thakur can wrestle with a Chamar or a Pasi. A wrestler must be at least 12 years of age, but there have been cases when even children of eight have wrestled. The two combatants must be more or less of the same height and weight. When a wrestler chooses his opponent, the latter, if he is not inclined to fight, can decline the challenge. Wrestlers from Lucknow, Unnao, Kanpur and Sitapur also take part in the *dangals* of the various villages.

The following description of a wrestling bout given by an eye-witness would present a clearer picture of this pastime. The match was held in Kutwa in September 1954. Spectators numbered round about 2,000. The bout was supervised partly by the villagers of Kutwa and partly by a group of five or six people from the National Extension Centre. There were four or five confectionery and betel shops set up near the arena. On one side of the arena was a small mud hut decorated with flowers. Incense was burned in this hut. This was to propitiate the ground on which the bout took place. Before each bout the combatants threw some sand into the hut. There was no image of any kind inside.

The bouts began at about 2.30 p.m. and lasted for four hours. The maximum time allowed for each bout was ten minutes. A combatant was recognised as the winner if he succeeded in throwing his opponent on the ground, and making his opponent's back touch the ground.

The participants were mainly boys. One of the men organising the show paraded round the arena with a group of challengers shouting, 'Who will fight these boys ?' Money prizes ranged from Re. 1 to Rs. 3. So the man announced how much was being waged with each of the boys. Those willing to fight volunteered and chose their opponents from among the challengers. If the two combatants were approximately of the same height and weight the bout was sanctioned. Both of them had the choice of declining to fight also.

A good many of the wrestlers were from Lucknow, and one was from Sitapur. One match for a prize of Rs. 2 was arranged between two combatants from Lucknow, but it was stopped by Munsi Ahir of Lalpur, who said that they were friends and would

share the money between them, without having a real fight. The bout was then called off and it was decided that the two Lucknow boys should not fight against each other. Munsi said that he had seen them fight against each other before and though they made it look good, they did not really fight very hard. The two withdrew in good humour, and those who were defeated in the various bouts also took their defeats in a sporting manner. All told the day was a great success.

Kabaddi. This is one of the outdoor games in which children participate with much enthusiasm. This game which is also known as *too-too* is played by two teams which stand facing each other. When the game starts, a boy from one team goes into the side of the other team saying *Kabaddi, Kabaddi* or *too, too, too* repeatedly and holding his breath. His aim is to touch the members of the other team, while the other party tries to catch him. If he is caught or is touched when he has 'lost' his breath, he is 'dead' and drops out of the game. On the other hand, if he succeeds in touching any members of the opposing team and escapes to his side without getting caught, all those who are touched by him are 'dead'. If the pursuer returns to his side or 'dies', a boy from the opposing team goes to the other side saying *too, too, too* or *Kabaddi, Kabaddi, Kabaddi* and the game continues in the same way. A 'death' in one team means a 'dead' person of the other team 'coming into life' again. Thus the game goes on, till the children are too tired to play any more.

Seehar. Seehar is also a game played by the boys. One of the boys is chosen as the 'thief'. All the other boys climb any of the trees close by. A stick lies on the ground. The aim of the boys is to touch this stick, but the 'thief' will not allow it. If he gets hold of any boy the latter has to drop out of the game. The boys take refuge on the trees, for the thief is not allowed to climb them. But even when on the trees the boys are not quite safe, for the 'thief' can jump and touch the boys. This game takes a long time to finish.

Lakri Marka. The people of Mohana and Balak play this game against each other. This competitive game improves social contact and goodwill among the people of the two villages. This game is usually organised in *Kartik* (Nov.-Dec.). Only two players

are needed. Each player has two sticks with him, each stick measuring about 3½ feet in length and covered with leather. One player attacks the other with his sticks, while his opponent wards off the blows with his own sticks and counter-attacks him. When a player succeeds in striking the other with his sticks, he wins a point, and finally the one with the greater number of points is declared the winner.

Another favourite pastime of the boys is to roll a wheel on the road, and run after it, guiding it with a stick.

Jhoola. The *jhoola* is the swing and this affords much fun to the girls and young women of the village. It is the only pastime for them. It is very common, particularly in the rainy season, to see the village girls going high up in the swings, singing lustily all the while. This, besides being an enjoyable pastime for the girls, is also a good form of exercise for them, which they sorely need. Though the *jhoola* is meant mainly for girls, boys also sometimes enjoy it. The songs sung while swinging in the *jhoola* are known as *kajaris* and *poorbis.*

KAJARĪ—1

Jasodā tero lāl manihār
Braj mān̲ becat curiyā nā
Apane mahal Rādhārānī pukārēn̲
Ham dhan pahirab curiyā nā
Dahine hāth se pakare naram kalāī
Bāē hāth colī maskaibē nā

Krishna put on the costume of a bangle-seller and went to sell bangles in village Braj. Radha called him to her palace; she wanted some bangles. With his right hand, Krishna slipped bangles on Radha's soft wrist, with his left he tore at her *choli.*

KAJARĪ—2

Desavā phailī naī khabariyā
Yah man bhāval bhaile nā
Jiledār paṭvariyan kī

Chūṭi gaī naukariyā
Tālukdār yahī mān̲ kahate
Chūṭi gaī jimidariyā
Majva mārēn̲ kāsatkariyā
Yah man bhāval bhaile nā
Jauni kisān bhūmidhar hoi ge
Saikil calēn̲ savariyā
Nīce se ūcā bhā ohdā
Bhā bāgan adhikariyā
Sārī pahirēn̲ ghar kī meheriyā
Yah man bhāval bhaile nā
Mauj kare parjā apane ghar
Ab nā jāb begariyā
Saram ke māre jamīn̲dār ab
Ānvēn nahīn̲ duvariyā
Chuṭṭī mili gē tabedariyā
Yah man bhāval bhaile nā

This is a post-zamindari abolition song. The news make the villagers happy since they are no longer under exacting pressure from the landlord, *patwari* or *ziledar*. With *Bhumidhari* rights, the status of peasants improves, and they take to the comforts of city-life, like bicycles and fine clothes. No longer have they to work as serfs for the landlord. In a democratic set-up, the common villagers are happy.

KAJARĪ—3

Baṅgalā mā baiṭhe mauj uraibē
Jab cakbandī hoi hē nā
Jamīn̲dār se jhagaṛā chūṭā
Yak ṭhaurī milī jamīna
Ab to ṭrēkṭar se jotvaibē
Jab cakbandī hoi hē nā
Bīc cāk mān̲ kuān̲ banaibē
Rupayā deī sarkār
Pānī iñjan se khīcavaib ē
Jab cakbandī hoi hē nā

Apane ghar se kāṭi galyārā
Har cakkē pahũcaibē
Karibē moṭaran se khetvahī
Jab cakbandī hoi hēnā

This song gives a pen-picture of the village when the Consolidation of Landholdings Scheme takes effect. Cultivators would then have all their fragmented pieces at one place, they would be able to have tube-wells, tractors and machines for cultivation, proper roads and houses and, over and above everything, no quarrels with the zamindar.

GĀRĪ

Paṅḍit Javāhir Lāl gae bilāiti
Jhumkaiyā more lāl
Roya roya pūn̲chēn̲ aṅgarejan kī nāri
Hamare bhatār kāhe dīnhyō nikāri
Tab vē bole Javāhir Lāl
Tumare bhatār kīnhe atyācār
Jhumkaiyā more lāl
Jab ham dyekhā yah atyācār
Tab Bhārata se dīnhān̲ nikāri
Tab man socēn̲ talukdār
Ab nā karihēn̲ kisanavān̲ begāri
Jhumkaiyā more lāl
Hāsi hāsi Kahatīn̲ sarpañcan kī nāri
Ohdā pāin balamuvān̲ hamāri
Ghar khete kā jhagaṛā hoi hē
Daure āvēn̲ duāre hamār
Jhumkaiyā more lāl

This song is based on an imaginary conversation between Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and the womenfolk of England, whose men he had turned out of India. Panditji says that since the Englishmen were tyrants, they were turned out. Post-independent India had abolished landlordism and freed peasants from agrestic serfdom and *begar*. The last stanza is a satire on democracy which

has placed power in the hands of the *Panchayat Sarpanch*, who surely enjoy and exploit their new rank and status.

Pūrvī

Hamrā māne nā kahanvāṉ
Piyā bēṉganvāṉ bece jāy
Dillī sahar kī lāgī bajariyā
Surmā dharā bikāy
Surmā dekhi gorī ākhiyāṉ pharkēṉ
Jiyarā dhak hoi jāy
Piyā bēṉganvāṉ..........
Kalkattā sahar kī lāgī bajariyā
Misiyā dharī bikāy
Misiyā dekhi gorī datiyāṉ pharkēṉ
Jiyarā dhak hoi jāy
Piyā bēṉganvāṉ..........
Kannōj sahar kī lāgī dukaniyāṉ
Coliyā dharī bikāy
Coliyā dekhi gorī jobanā pharkēṉ
Jiyarā dhak hoi jāy
Piyā bēṉganvāṉ..........

The desires of a village woman are portrayed in this *Poorbi.* The husband is a vegetable-seller, but the wife wants to go shopping to towns like Delhi and Calcutta and to buy cosmetics and gay dresses for which alone her heart longs.

Nakaṭā

Lai de Banāras kī sārī
Cāhe biki jāy kāstakārī
Lehāgā orhnī bahut din pahirā
Sārī kī āī hē bārī
Cāhe biki................
Kurtā salūkā ab nā pahirab
Jamphar mē barī majedārī
Cāhe biki................

Karanphūl jhumkā nā pahirab
Ēran det dhabi bhārī
Cāhe biki................
Nathunī kīl hāth nā chuibē
Laṭkan par jaibē balihārī
Cāhe biki................
Cappal se jiv bhārī hoigā
Saṇḍal leb karārī
Cāhe biki................
Abahīn̲ dīn dasgunvān̲ laganvān̲
Karjā bhavā baṛā bhārī
Cāhe biki................
'Mohan' kā tum kahnā mānō
Abahīn̲ nā pahirō sārī
Cāhe biki................
Abki gannā ka jab perbē
Sārī laibē piyārī
Cāhe biki................

The theme is the same as in the earlier *Poorbi.* The village woman is tired of wearing old-style clothes and ornaments, and wants to buy the same dresses and jewels as her sister in the city wears. She is crazy about them, even though the husband has to sell his lands to be able to buy all these for his wife.

DĀDARĀ

Laibē Banāras kī sārī
Cāhe ka biki jāy kāstakārī
Lehāgā orhnī ka algē rakhi deo
Sārī kaso tār jārī
Cāhe ka................
Kurtā kamīc ka ab nā pahirō
Jamphar kī jarad kinārī
Cāhe ka................
Nathunī kīl ka abahīn̲ turāvō
Laṭkan garhaibē baṛā bhārī
Cāhe ka................

Karanphūl jhumka na pahinō
Rīṅē maṅgāi deb pyārī
Cāhe ka................
Cappal ke band ṭūṭī jāti hēṉ
Sanḍal maṅgāi deb nyārī
Cāhe ka................
Bigahā bhar ūkh māṉ sabē maṅgaibē
Cāhe bikāy kāstakārī
Cāhe ka................
'Mohan' kā jo kahanā manihō
Rahihō sabkī dulārī
Cāhe ka................

In continuation of the earlier *Nakata* :

The husband is assuring his wife that he would buy everything she wants, but all this could be done even without selling lands. He would buy her colourful saris, modern jewellery and sandals. He would, however, crush sugarcane, and from the money obtained from its sale, he would satisfy her wishes.

OTHER ENTERTAINMENTS

There are no dramas or plays arranged in the village of Mohana itself, but the residents go to the neighbouring villages where such entertainments are provided. Often a tableau depicting mythological stories is staged. One form of such entertainment is known as *Nautanki*, in which there is little acting, but the story is presented in the dialogue form, and in the dialogue too there is no speaking, for everything is expressed in singing.

Dances too are not very common. Izzat, the eunuch dancer, a resident of Kutwa, is invited to dance at marriage functions. Last year, he happened to pass through Mohana on his way to another village, and on the request of the residents of Mohana, he stopped there for some time and entertained the villagers with his dances and songs.

DRINKS, DRUGS AND OTHER INDULGENCES

When time and money permit, the villagers often indulge in drink-

ing and allied vices. Taking toddy and other intoxicants is a very common thing in the village. The village has no distillery or licensed liquor shop, so the villagers have to go to neighbouring villages or Daliganj (in Lucknow) to take drinks. Two of the licensed liquor shops, besides selling liquor, also sell opium, *bhaang* and *ganja*. One of the liquor shops has only liquor, but since it is on the road to Lucknow, it is frequented by villagers who go to Lucknow for sight-seeing or to Chowk to visit prostitutes. Most castes, high and low, indulge in drinking. Among the Thakur there are four or five regular wine-takers. Brahmins are not supposed to take any liquor, because they belong to the priestly class, but the Brahmin of Mohana observe no such restrictions. The Dhobi say that since they have to stand in water for a long time to do their work they are forced to take intoxicants of one kind or another, as a preventive measure against catching cold, and also to strengthen them. The low-caste people, who are generally poor, say that since they cannot afford to take good nourishing food, they have to take liquor, to give them vigour and zeal to do their work, which is very laborious. Toddy is very cheap and so the poor people resort to this. A type of country wine is prepared from *mahuwa*, water-melon or barley.

Opium is not taken by many villagers, but *ganja* is in common use. It is used for smoking in the *chilam* instead of tobacco. *Bhaang* is used by many. It is believed that *bhaang* is not an intoxicant, but a refreshing beverage and moreover it was taken by Lord Shiva. Tobacco is used both for smoking and chewing. *Booti* is edible tobacco, and is supposed to have several medicinal qualities. It is taken by the young and the old, by men and women alike. *Bidi* is cheap and very popular in the village. Even children enjoy it. Smoking and chewing make the evening conversation-parties all the more enjoyable.

ENVIRONMENTAL SANITATION

Perhaps the full import of sayings such as 'cleanliness is next to godliness', and 'dirt brings disease' is never fully realised even by educated people. Our cities and towns are dirty, but the villages are worse, for there the people are ignorant. Further they lack

many of the modern facilities which one finds in urban areas. Who is to be blamed for this state of affairs ? The villagers themselves ? The Government ? Both ? With whomsoever the blame might lie the fact remains (and that is what we are concerned with at present) that Mohana is not a clean place.

WATER SUPPLY

Tanks. There are five tanks in the village of which only three are used, the other two being far away from the populated region of the village. The first of the used tanks known as the Anglia Tal is situated in the north-eastern part of the village, in its well populated region. The village washermen wash clothes in this tank. The animals of the village drink water from it and the Ahir bathe in it. Many villagers defecate near the tank and wash themselves with its water. They wash their mouths also with the same water. The second tank is called Nanhey Wala Tal. It is in the eastern zone of the village. This tank is full of *Jal Kumbhi* (a variety of water plant, having violet flowers). The village cattle drink this water, and people defecate near the tank. It is, however, not used by the washermen. The water of this tank runs into the Anglia Tal in the rainy season. The third and biggest is the Bari Tal situated in the north-western sector of the village. Once a dead body was found in this tank. In the rainy season the waters of this tank flow into River Katar. People wash themselves in this tank after defecation and urination. They wash their mouths also with the same water. The villagers use this tank for bathing purposes also. Vegetables and cooking utensils are washed with water from Bari Tal.

Wells. A visitor to the village turns away in disgust from the tanks to look at the wells, only to find that the well-water is little cleaner. There are five wells. Only two have walls built above the ground level. Even the water from these two wells is not safe. The *pakka* well which is adjacent to the *Shivala* is the better one of the two. It has a platform surrounding it. Though it is provided with a pulley, the people never use it but they stand on the platform to draw water. People bathe at this well. They also wash their clothes there, beating them on the platform of

the well, though another small platform is built for this purpose. Twigs and leaves from the surrounding trees fall into the well. The well has never been cleaned, in the memory of any villager, and the twigs and leaves decay in the well. The other three wells are on a level with the ground. People bathe near these wells, and the dirty water flows into them. These wells are also never cleaned. No disinfectants such as potassium permanganate are used, with the result that mosquitoes and disease germs flourish in and around the wells. The water is never filtered when used for drinking or cooking purposes. The water of one well produces strange effects when food is cooked in it, the rice or flour turning reddish yellow.

LATRINES

Houses are not provided with latrines, and all the men and women go out into the fields to answer calls of nature. Thus the fields, not to speak of roads and lanes, serve as public latrines. Children use the drains in front of the houses. Women generally take water with them, but the men go to the tanks and the wells to wash themselves.

PERSONAL CLEANLINESS

Many of the villagers do not bathe regularly. Men bathe at the wells and tanks, thereby adding to the dirt of these water-sources. Women and children bathe just outside their houses near the drains. Soap is never used, but *ubtan* is used now and then, particularly on festive occasions. Oil bath is taken once a week or once a fortnight. The villagers have their hair shaved and nails pared occasionally. Generally they do not apply oil for their hair, and it is very rarely that they wash their hair well. *Neem* or *Babool* twigs are used to clean teeth, but some of the villagers just wash their mouths with water without cleaning their teeth. People are often seen wearing dirty clothes.

FOOD HABITS

Custom demands that before a man or woman prepares *kachcha*

food, he or she must take a bath and put on clean garments. Before eating food they must change their clothes and wash their hands and feet. A woman is not allowed to prepare food during her menstrual periods. When *pakka* food is prepared, these restrictions are not observed, and even when *kachcha* food is prepared they are not observed strictly, for there are some who cannot afford a second set of clothes. In such cases, the one who prepares food wears only a *dhoti* when cooking. Again, most people are not particular about bathing or changing clothes before taking food. When a woman is living by herself she has to prepare food even during her menstrual period. Thus these customary rules are fast dying out.

Generally all the members of a family take their food out of one *thali* and drink water out of the same vessel.

STRUCTURE OF HOUSES

Houses have been built in the village without any pre-planning, and hence they are crowded and huddled together. Further, the break-up of joint families has brought about more congestion; for example, if a family had a house and a *hata*, the animals and their fodder were left in the *hata* while the people lived in the house. But on a division of property, if one son got the *hata* as his share, he had to convert that into a house for his family. Then animals and men lived together in the house, as well as in the *hata*, now converted into a house. When a house is to be divided between three or four sons, *kachcha* walls are raised in the house to mark off the different portions to the different sons.

Between the *kothar* and the village school is an open space of land on which are situated the *Shivala* and the *pakka* well. This open land has a number of *neem* trees, and is perhaps the only bright spot in the village. But near the *kothar* itself are a number of old dilapidated houses. The new Thakur houses have some open space in front, but the old houses do not have this. The Thakuran *tola* is crowded with many houses. The Chamaran *tola* is also not built in any planned manner. In the Ahiran *tola* a few houses are built in a row, while the rest show the usual lack of planning. In short, all the *tolas* indicate absence of any systematic

plan, and everyone seems to have built his house according to his own whims and fancies.

There is no real *pakka* house in the village, i.e. none made of baked bricks. Most of the houses have mud walls, but a few belonging to the better families are made of unbaked bricks. When one wishes to build a house no attention is paid to design or plan. The general structure of village houses may be said to be as follows.

First there is a *tanaha* (a type of verandah), with a thatched roof which is supported either on poles or *kachcha* bricks. As one crosses the *tanaha* and enters the house one finds oneself in a room known as *barotha* which opens into a courtyard on the opposite side. Surrounding the courtyard on all sides are verandahs with thatched roofs. One of these verandahs is used as the kitchen. Attached to the verandahs are small rooms. These rooms and the *barotha* are roofed with wooden planks. But in the houses of poor people these also have only thatched roofs. A house though built in this manner is often altered and walls are put up in a criss-cross fashion. The houses have no bathrooms.

In summer people sleep out in the courtyard, but in winter and in the rainy season they sleep indoors. Sometimes animals also find their sleeping accommodation inside the houses. Sometimes the cows would be kept even in the *barotha,* and that is the room in which the people take their food. They do not mind it, for they say that cowdung is sacred.

The houses have only doors and no windows or ventilators with the result that it is stuffy and dark inside the rooms. The main entrance of a house always faces east, to get the morning sun as early as possible—one of the villagers gave this as the reason. It is always not possible to have the main entrance facing this direction, still it would never be made to face the south, because in the opinion of the villagers only the feet of a dead person should point to the south. As far as possible even the other doors in the house do not face in this direction.

The houses in the village are only single-storied ones. In some houses there are stairs leading up to the terrace, otherwise a ladder is used.

CLEANLINESS OF THE HOUSE

The villagers say that houses are cleaned daily, because a Hindu does not like dirt in the house. Early every morning the house is swept and the utensils are washed. Then the women take their bath and prepare food only after that. But this is not true in all cases. The place where animals are kept are cleaned by the men. Cowdung is stored in a certain place, and in the afternoon women make cowdung cakes out of it to be used as fuel. When cowdung is to be collected for manure it is stored in a pit in which the sweepings from the house and other rubbish are thrown. Houses are never washed because the floor is *kachcha* but the floor is plastered with cowdung once or twice a week, generally on Mondays or Fridays. The walls are given a coating of mud and cowdung mixed together on the *Dewali* festival and on any ceremonial occasion. In the village 'home-cleanliness' has a very restricted meaning, for in cleaning a house, only the inside and the front are cleaned, while the backyard is thoroughly neglected. If there is any space at the back of the house, weeds are allowed to grow there, and that space is often used as a lavatory. The pit in which all rubbish is collected is sometimes very close to the house. Ditches and pits near the houses are common. They form good breeding places for the mosquitoes.

DRAINAGE SYSTEM

There is no planned drainage system in the village. People generally avoid making drains in front of the house, preferring to have them either at the back or at the sides. A drain goes from the courtyard to the outside. This is not a *pakka* drain but is merely dug in the ground. But when it passes through a room, pipes of baked clay are used. This drain which connects the courtyard with the outside opens into a pit at a distance. Often the drain gets blocked and then the men clean them with long poles. In summer the drains dry up quickly, but in the rainy season they overflow and the dirty water flows into the lanes. In several cases there are no pits to receive the water from the drains, and such drains open out into the lanes.

MAINTENANCE OF ROADS AND LANES

There is no one responsible for the maintenance of the village roads and lanes, and they always remain dirty. The villagers clean the portion of the roads and lanes in front of their houses, otherwise no one takes any care. Some time ago the *gram sabha* undertook to clean the roads and lanes, but this had to be given up due to lack of co-operation on the part of the villagers.

BURIAL GROUNDS

Burial grounds are not far from the village. One is to the north-east of the village, just one and a half furlongs off. This is used by the Thakur. Another Thakur burial place is towards the south-west hardly 250 yards away from the *kothar*. There is another one, and that is used by Chamar, about half a mile away from the village to the north-west. Burial places in such close proximity to the village are not conducive to healthy living.

DISEASES AND THEIR TREATMENT

In the rainy season the villagers suffer from malaria and dysentery, but suprisingly enough, the toll of life taken by these diseases is only 2%. Cholera is prevalent in summer. Here again not many sufferers die. But small-pox comes on with virulence, and out of every 100 patients about fifteen die. No particular disease is found in the winter season. The village has not been touched by plague since 1910. There are only a few cases of sun-stroke in summer in spite of the terrible heat.

When a person falls ill, he is confined to the innermost room which is devoid of fresh air and sunlight. In some cases he is laid out in the open, but more often than not, it is not so. An expectant mother when she is about to bring forth her child is kept in a dark room. She is not allowed to wash her body till the Pandit proclaims the auspicious time for it. Till then she is oiled regularly. A fire is lit in the room to avoid cold. When one has fever, again it is the dark room with a fire in it and plenty of clothes to cover the patient. In cases of illness native medicines

are tried first. If the native remedies are not effective then witch-doctors are called. Modern medicines are tried only as a last resort, and often when too late. This is partly because modern treatment is so expensive.

Malaria. When one has an attack of malaria one is generally administered a decoction of *tulsi* leaves. The patient is also given tea to which a little ginger is added.

Dysentery. The usual remedy is curds with a little salt and mint.

Small-pox. There is no treatment given to the patient, except moving a *neem* twig gently up and down his body, and that is only to ease the itching sensation. About eight years ago there was an outbreak of small-pox. The villagers did not deem it worth while to inform the medical authorities, but worshipped goddess Seetla, for they believe that the disease is caused by her, and what is the power and skill of a handful of medical men when compared with the inexorable power of the goddess? No wonder then that they do not favour being vaccinated against the disease. When vaccinators visit the village they are bribed by the villagers not to vaccinate them, particularly the children. Their belief that disease and death are meted out to man by callous and dictatorial gods and goddesses explains their indifference to cultivate habits of cleanliness.

Cholera (haija). In the case of cholera, the attitude of the villagers is surprisingly different. This disease is believed to be caused by the deity Bhooian, but when there is an outbreak of this disease, the villagers take it upon themselves to inform the authorities in due time. They are not averse to being inoculated against it, and any preventive measures taken by the Health Department are welcomed even by the most orthodox villagers. The native remedy for cholera is onion juice.

Heat-stroke (loo). The patient is given the juice of green mangoes.

Gastric troubles. No native remedies are tried for these, but the witch doctors are summoned at the very beginning.

Modern treatment. Lately, due to contacts with city life, there is a tendency among the villagers to consult medical practitioners, but often it is only after native remedies and witch doctors have proved futile. S. P. Shukla was, during the war, an army compounder and he has some knowledge of modern medicines. He also

keeps a few medicines with him, and so the villagers sometimes go to consult him about various medicines. There is no qualified doctor in Mohana, but there is one in village Kutwa about a mile and a half away from Mohana. To him the residents of Mohana go often to get medicines. Malarial patients are given Paludrine or Anacin, and for those suffering from cholera 'Amrat Dhara' is prescribed. But often they are taken to Ayurvedic *vaids* in Lucknow, if they can afford it.

CHILD-BIRTH

The Bhaksorins are the only people who are qualified in the village to attend on expectant mothers. There is no other help available. Even women who have had many children and grandchildren do not know what is to be done at the time of child-birth. If a Bhaksorin is not available at the time of need, the mother has to endure the pangs and throes till one is available. If any complications arise because of neglect or carelessness, the mother with her feeble strength has to fight it out herself as best as possible. The wife of R. P. Singh gave birth to a child in September 1954. Fortunately for her the delivery was a very easy one. But after the birth of the child the mother remained unattended for a long time because R. P. Singh could not get a Bhaksorin, so the umbilical cord which should have been cut soon after birth, was not cut for a long time. The village Bhaksorin had gone elsewhere. R. P. Singh went to the nearby villages in search of a Bhaksorin, but none was available, as they had all gone to witness a fair. Finally he was able to get a Bhaksorin in Bakshi-ka-Talab, and brought her to the village at about 7 p.m. when at last she cut the cord. The child was born at 11 a.m. and for eight hours the mother and the child remained in that state. At that time, there were present old women who had helped in dozens of deliveries, but none of them knew how to cut the umbilical cord. R. P. Singh himself did not appear to be very worried about the state of affairs. There had been no arrangements made for the child-birth, for the women of the family were apparently indifferent. The expectant mother herself was very careless, though this was her third child.

ATTITUDE OF THE VILLAGERS TO GERMS AND DISEASES

Very little is done to clean the wells or tanks, or to use disinfectants to destroy insects and germs. Drains near the houses often have water stagnating in them, thus forming a good breeding place for mosquitoes, but the villagers never seem to care to clean them. They have, however, no objection if any government or social service organisations clean the village and adopt measures to eliminate disease-causing germs and insects. The rueful fact is that the villagers are completely indifferent to acquiring a better standard of living. Poverty is not always the cause. It is mere indifference. However, of late there has been a change for the better in the attitude of the villagers towards health and sanitation. At any rate, they appreciate the work done by the Medical and Health authorities. Bux Singh Naik said that the Medical and Health personnel were efficient and that it was their efficiency that made the villagers more conscious of their own health. Now the villagers took better care of the sick than before. They were less afraid of inoculation and vaccination. He further added that the villagers themselves sometimes invited the Health and Medical personnel to come and clean their drains and wells. Baran Singh is convinced that the local witch doctors are not so effective in treating diseases as the city doctors are. He preferred an injection to an offering made to propitiate the gods. He praised the Public Health Staff who occasionally visited the village to clean drains and disinfect wells. Thus though at present the villagers have no sense of cleanliness or healthy living, there is every hope that ere long, with proper encouragement and help, their ways of life will be cleaner and healthier.

FOOD HABITS

Cereals such as wheat, barley, maize, and millet are ground into flour either at home or at a flour mill. Rice is polished before it is consumed. Sometimes grains like wheat and barley are broken into coarse pieces and cooked like rice. The cereals and flour are stored in earthen pots.

Two types of food are prepared. One is known as *pakka,* in the preparation of which *ghee* or oil is used, and the other *kachcha,* in which *ghee* is not used. The villagers generally take *kachcha* food, which consists of *roti,* rice and *dal. Pakka* food is prepared on special occasions. Three meals are taken daily, but for poor people, the morning meal comprises the remnants of the previous night's dinner. Lunch time is generally 2 p.m. and the food commonly taken at that time consists of rice, *roti* and *dal,* which is the same food taken at night also. Vegetables and meat are taken if available and can be afforded. Only the rich villagers use milk, *ghee,* curds and fruits. Poor people use the flour of maize and millet, to prepare *roti,* as they cannot afford to have wheat flour, and when they cook rice, they use the inferior types.

RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

House-building ceremonies. When anyone wishes to build a house, he first consults a Pandit about the *saait* (auspicious time) to begin the work. The Pandit, after consulting his *patra,* tells him the *saait* for cutting the first sod, and names a male member of the family who has to lay the foundation stone as directed by the Pandit. The *pooja* is performed and *gur* or sweets are distributed among the villagers as *prasad.* When the walls are to be constructed small black flags are fixed at the corners so as to avert the effects of the evil eye. This is supposed to prevent the walls from cracking. The walls are not made of bricks but clay. The clay is taken from ponds and kneaded well so that it is soft and pliable. The walls are railed by placing lumps of clay, one on top of the other, with a spade-like implement. When an adequate height has been reached, the sides are levelled with the spade. This is known as the *Radda* method. When the main door is to be fixed, a little turmeric, rice, one pice and *supari* are tied in a piece of cloth and buried under the plinth. Well-to-do people supply meals for five unmarried girls on this occasion. When the house is complete and before the owner occupies it, the ritual of *grah-pravesh* (entry into the house) is performed. The owner arranges a *Katha* and then a *biradari* feast. If he is poor, the second item is usually dropped.

13. Village: a Concept, a Way of Life

I

THREE-QUARTERS of the people of the world live in villages; therefore, as Prof. R. Redfield says, 'the small community has been the very predominant form of human living throughout the history of mankind'. As the anthropologist has done most of his field studies in little communities, Prof. Redfield thinks the village must be the natural extension of his field of specialisation, though, for obvious reasons, he had so far confined himself to the study of small tribal communities. The total approach that the anthropologists have developed for the study of a culture or cultures makes it easy for them to use the methods they have used in the study of tribal communities, thus justifying their formidable claim for rural assignments. In India, anthropologists have an important role to play. They have been racing against time, as it were, to study the tribal communities which are at various levels of progress and decay, and they have also to study the villages, for tribes are now settled in villages, and the target of the administration is the complete ruralisation of the tribes. Our villages also are at various levels of development, and there is an apparent 'continuum' noticed between tribal settlements and our villages—though, this may not be true to the same extent —and between our villages and urban centres.

Prof. Redfield speaks of four specific characters of a little community. A little community, he says, has the quality of distinctiveness, it is so small that it is a unit of personal observation or else, 'being somewhat larger and yet homogeneous, it provides in some part of it a unit of personal observation fully representative of the whole'; further a little community is homogeneous, and 'is self-sufficient and provides for all or most of the activities

and needs of the people in it'. Prof. Redfield assumes that a little community is a cradle-to-the-grave arrangement. 'A club, a clique, even a family is a sectional or segmental contrasted with the integral little community' (*The Little Community*, p. 4).

The study of a village as a whole, as an integrated way of living, thinking, feeling or as a constellation of parts, such as material culture, occupation, technology, kinship system, all leading to a proper understanding of the little community, has its limitations particularly in Indian conditions. An Indian village has a past, it has a value system, it is a sentimental system, all moored in the rich experiences of the past. At the same time, it is not limited by the four corners of the village. The kinship ties that exist in the village do not exhaust themselves in the village itself, but embrace people of distant and near villages; and crises, social and political, find the villagers in each others' lap, and a wide network of relations transcending the limits of the village bind together villages, and families, even distantly situated, so that an attempt to isolate a village would be impracticable. A village may be conceived—and I feel there is sense in doing so—not as a self-contained unit, but as integrated at different levels with the total social system of the country. Just as there are different levels of cultural development, there are different levels of integration.

A village, as it is conceived, is not a stable unit. Apart from the casual migrants who find employment outside, the families constituting the village society are constantly changing in the sense that people go out of the village by marriage and others come in by marriage, and though a periodical return of the women married outside the village takes place—and the wives of the village often go back to their parents' villages—the strong traditions of family life, and prestige values associated with them, provide a bulwark against rapid change or sudden transformation of our rural life. A village is a *whole* when we ignore the ties and kinship bonds that unite larger aggregations of people—it is a *whole* when we ignore the methods of communications, and the structural dissimilarities, that one finds in the communities inhabiting a village. The caste-wards that we find in most of our villages, the 'purer' settlements which are inhabited by the higher

castes, and the 'polluted' quarters owned by the lower and scheduled castes are so widely dissimilar that even within the village we may have little in common, in ideas, beliefs and practices, in education, income and levels of living. In the matter of inter-caste relations, life and living habits are different, and there are gaps which have remained so, in spite of centuries of joint living, and cooperation and competition within the village.

Superficial similarities have made us assume the integrated nature of our villages. The process of culture change that is proceeding in the village is that of trans-culturation so that the higher castes today accept ways of life which they avoided and are also dropping their cultural traits, beliefs and rituals, and the lower castes are adopting some of the customs and values of the upper castes, in some cases, those that the upper castes are dropping themselves. The former have accepted and are accepting many of the beliefs and practices of the lower castes in the village while the lower castes are becoming conscious of their important role in the village, and of a progressive future. Nowhere is this process better illustrated than in the religious life of the village that we have described earlier, in which there is a perfect give-and-take and reciprocity of relationships. Despite economic competition and the continued exploitation of the lower by the higher caste-groups, there do exist common problems and common interests.

2

Of late, in India, we have a spate of literature on our rural life. Some have been written by foreign scholars, some by Indians. Some of these studies have been monographically oriented, as for example, Srinivas's 'Mysore Village' or Dube's 'Indian Village'. Some are problem oriented, as one discovers in the various anthologies, published in recent years, which are collections of papers published in anthropological or social science journals or in the *Economic Weekly*. The West Bengal Government has published a volume of essays on Indian village life and problems, edited by M. N. Srinivas. McKim Marriot has edited a series of articles on Indian rural life, under the title *Village India*, while the Ethno-

graphic and Folk Culture Society, Uttar Pradesh, has published a volume on *Rural Profiles*, the first of a series of village studies. All these indicate the interest the anthropologists are taking in rural assignments. Some of these studies are intimate, intensive and competent, some are superficial; and no doubt some have raised our expectations, for they have focussed attention on the many problems of rural life which demand priority in the context of the planning for the countryside, which is the avowed goal of our planners.

Our assignment has been of a different kind. We undertook to study a village to provide the benchmark data for the evaluation of rural problems, and to develop an approach to rural problems, which must be adequately founded on background information. This study has revealed that a village, even if it has not been pulsating with hopes and fears that the Community Development Programmes and National Extension Administration have raised in the villages catered by them and are anxious to settle, its problems, tension, apartheid, and ambition are in keeping with the social awareness that characterise our countryside.

3

We have described the silhouette of a village in Uttar Pradesh. It may be typical or atypical but it certainly is a rural pattern of living, as it exists today. The study has revealed that an Indian village is a complex web, and the threads that weave the pattern, both of the warp and the woof, require to be identified, if the nexus of relations has to be deciphered. The importance of such knowledge increases when the village is near a large town—in this case it is only eight miles from Lucknow, the capital of Uttar Pradesh. It is not an absolutely communicating village, it is not urbanised, as could be expected, but it lies on the periphery of an urban area—it communicates through the many individuals who have contacts with the town, and who go out and return to the village regularly and occasionally. The village has no claims to education so that through lack of reception, ideas do not gravitate or filter, as they do in other villages—yet the village partakes of the general social awareness characteristic of our present-day rural life.

A village is a way of life, because the people still live more or less as they did before—in spite of contact and communication. We cannot ignore this way of life, if we want to level it up. It is through intimate knowledge of our rural life that we can discover the ethos and aspirations of our rural life.

The Thakurs are the dominant caste, but not because they are numerically preponderant—a dominant caste is not always a numerically preponderant caste. A few families, owning land and with a higher level of living, a single zamindar family with its extended kinship ties, may exercise considerable influence on the village and may determine and decide the pattern of village life and the nexus of the ties between the various castes living in the village. The Thakurs own the land, they are proprietary cultivators, they may corner the major portion of the village land; the other castes have willingly or unwillingly to serve them and live by serving them. Even if a caste is numerically dominant in a village it need not be socially dominant. It is only when the caste has a dominant status in other villages, i.e., in a group of neighbouring villages, that the numerical preponderance in a village can be cashed. The majority concept is a modern democratic one. Indian villages probably never exercised majority rule, or accepted majority verdict. The feudal India did not compromise with numerical strength. Besides, a lone Brahmin, a *sadhu*, a zamindar, a lone social worker—each has exercised more influence than a numerically preponderant community in the village. The backward classes, scheduled castes, preponderate in many villages, even a particular caste like the Lodha or the Pasi may be numerically the largest caste in a village, but authority and importance may attach to the few upper caste families, or to the zamindar family; that is the social matrix of the Indian village.

The Chamars in Mohana constitute 23.5 per cent of the village population and the Thakurs 21.5 per cent—the rest of the population is divided into 13 other castes. While the Thakurs are second in the list in numerical importance, they hold 40 per cent of the land in the village. This fact alone would account for the economic dominance of the Thakurs. As they are also the propertied caste, their prestige and influence are beyond cavil.

In many villages, the dominant role in the village may be shared by the petty shopkeepers and Baniyas who live by lending money to the villagers, and their importance can be gauged by the amount of jealousy and hatred shown to them by the upper castes of the village. With the abolition of the Zamindari system in Uttar Pradesh, the Thakurs have lost both in economic and social status, and are frantically making a bid for maintaining their hold on the village. Some have become money-lenders, and are competing with the Sahukars or the Baniyas, some have opened grocery shops in the village, and one finds a kind of chaos in the context of rural occupations, and inter-caste relations.

An Indian village is not merely a way of life, it is also a concept —it is a constellation of values and so long as our value system does not change, or changes slowly and not abruptly, the village will retain its identity, and so it has done till today. The continuity that one finds in other parts between rural and urban living— a 'continuum', as a noted anthropologist has described it—does not necessarily exist between villages and towns in India. There are two distinct constellations of values and there are sharp dividing lines between the two levels of living and experience. Even villages situated on the outskirts of towns have maintained the value system, and thus our villages do not become townships. Even villages of 5,000 inhabitants or more, which the Indian Census defines as 'urban', retain the rural value system and differ from cities and towns, a fact which even casual observers will not fail to notice. We see in Mohana people who have an adequate knowledge of and contacts with towns; they are the know-alls in the village, and in many matters they have special prestige status in the village. People listen to them, admire them for their experience, receive assistance and advice when they need the same, but they regard the village as distinct and socially distant from the town.

That is how abnormal behaviour, luxurious living, immoral conduct, atheism and selfishness are dubbed as *Sahariya*—belonging to the town, and thus different from the pattern of their rural life. When a father refuses to send his son to a school in the city, he says, 'I don't want him to become *sahariya*', which term connotes a constellation of values different from the one with

which he is familiar, and to which he has been tuned for generations. This dichotomy of urban-rural living has been the greatest bulwark of Indian culture which has preserved our 'cultural heritage'. In spite of the fact that there was no organised Church to secure ancient religious lore and ritual practices, popular religion has not suffered disintegration; particularly is it true of popular Hinduism. This dichotomy today is the greatest single factor which stands in the way of levelling up the villages.

The village that we have described shows that it is still the nucleus of the Indian sentiment system and an attack on this institution without proper safeguards for the maintenance of the sentimental system would intensify and prolong the resistance of the village to change. We can hardly afford to minimise this sentimental system, or as we have previously characterised it as a constellation of values, our strength would depend on the recognition of the value system or sentimental system—this provides the moorings of our rural life. An orientation of the value system has to be worked out, side by side with sponsored changes and action programmes, for the latter may not always fit in with the system of values or the ties that bind the villagers to a common living and sharing of culture.

4

CASTE in India has never been a stable structural organisation. Castes have split into subcastes, the latter again into smaller endogamous units. Fusion and fission have produced innumerable social groups that are sometimes wrongly called 'castes'. Caste mobility has been both vertical as well as horizontal. It is the vertical mobility that has been emphasised; the horizontal mobility has not attracted the notice it deserves. The apex of the caste pyramid has always been more prepossessing than its base, so that it is the vertical mobility that has been noticed and not the horizontal spread.

A Brahmin has always regarded the other castes as inferior. He has looked down from the apex he owns and has recognised the other castes as vertically arranged. Any mobility he has noticed has been of the ascent of caste, not its horizontal spread.

To the Brahmin the Kurmi is a Kurmi whether he is a *Biyahut* or a *Sagahut*, the Chamar similarly is a Chamar, while to the Kurmi or the Chamar, the various sections, some of whom are hypergamous to the others, are spread on a horizontal plane, and he interprets the distance as remote or near. Fission produces distance, fusion heals the schism. The Nuniya, Shorkar or Shorgar of Uttar Pradesh separated from the Kshattriyas on grounds of occupation which the latter considered to be degraded; today the Kshattriyas have accepted their degraded counterparts and are integrating or fusing into one big caste.

Analytical studies of Indian culture and civilisation have not been very significant, and theoretical constructs can only be developed on the basis of logical analysis and informed interpretation. The data on Indian cultures are still too meagre to be of much use in such formulations, but it would certainly be worthwhile to put any such construct to the test. Professor M. N. Srinivas has put forward a tentative hypothesis, on the basis of his ethnographic data from Coorg, and lately from his study of Rampura, a village in Mysore, a process of acculturation to which he has applied the term 'Sanskritization'. It is not a new term, it has been used by many, but there is not much agreement about the connotation of the term. Srinivas, however, uses it in a particular sense. He finds 'Sanskritization' a useful concept; it has, he affirms, helped him in the analysis of the social and religious life of the Coorgs of South India, and he thinks a few other anthropologists have also found it useful.

A concept, if it is to be a useful one, must be clear, precise, and logically consistent. A tool is expected to be a refined instrument, and should be as adequate as possible to meet its requirements. Srinivas writes, "Sanskritization is no doubt an awkward term, but it was preferred to Brahmanisation for several reasons." Further he writes—I quote from his article on the same subject in the *Far Eastern Quarterly*, Vol. XV, No. 4, p. 484, Aug. 1956: "The usefulness of Sanskritization as a tool in the analysis of Indian society is greatly limited by the complexity of the concept as well as its looseness." Again, "Sanskritization is an extremely complex and heterogeneous concept. It is even possible that it would be more profitable to treat it as a bundle of concepts than as a

single concept. It is only a name for a widespread social and cultural process (*Ibid*, p. 495)." "In spite of such awkwardness and vagueness of the concept", he writes, "I would continue to use it" and "that too unrepentantly" (*Society in India*, ed. A. Aiyappan, *et al.*, 1956). If it was Prof. Srinivas alone using it, one would not despair. But Srinivas's status as a sociologist makes it easy for the concept to filter into the stock of conceptual tools, uncritically accepted by young workers in field research, and there lies the danger. I would, therefore, like to quote extensively from the writings of Srinivas, to examine his claims for the adoption of the concept. Fortunately, he has stated and restated his position with regard to the concept of Sanskritization in the article referred to above. My task, therefore, has been made easy. The following quotations, in the same context, and without divesting them from the context, will be helpful in assessing the value of the concept.

"The agents of Sanskritization were not always the Brahmins" ....."normally Sanskritization enables a caste to obtain a higher position in the hierarchy"...."in the sphere of kinship, Sanskritization stresses the importance of the *Vamsa*, which is the patrilineal lineage of the Brahmins. In short, Sanskritization results in increasing the importance of sons by making them a religious necessity. At the same time it has the effect of lowering the value of daughters....(1956 : 485)." "Sanskritization means not only the adoption of new customs and habits but also exposure of new ideas and values which have found frequent expression in the vast body of Sanskrit literature, sacred as well as secular. *Karma*, *dharma*, *papa*, *punya*, *maya*, *samsara* and *moksa*, are examples of some of the most common Sanskritic theological ideas, and when a people become Sanskritized these words occur frequently in their talk. These ideas reach the common people, through Sanskritic myths and stories"...."the spread of Sanskritic theological ideas increased under British rule"...."the development of communications carried Sanskritization to areas previously inaccessible and the spread of literacy carried it to groups very low in the caste hierarchy"...."not only this"[he continues], "western technology, railways, the internal combustion engine, press, radio and 'plane have aided the spread of Sans-

kritization (1956: 486)"...."the introduction by the British of a western political institution like parliamentary democracy, also contributed to the increased Sanskritization of the country".... "Sanskritization can occur without any reference whatever to the economic betterment of a group (1956: 492)"...."economic betterment, the acquisition of political power, education, leadership and desire to move up in the hierarchy are all relevant factors in Sanskritization"...."Sanskritization does not automatically result in the achievement of a higher status for the group".... "continued Sanskritization of castes will probably mean the eventual introduction of major cultural and structural changes in Hindu society as a whole." In the next sentence, he writes, "however thoroughgoing the Sanskritization of an untouchable group may be, it is unable to cross the barrier of untouchability." To the question whether he regards Sanskritization as a one-way process, he writes, "it is a two-way process though the local cultures seem to have received more than they have given."

Srinivas accounts for the vertical social mobility of castes by the "process of Sanskritization"—a process in which a lower caste is able in a generation or two to rise to a higher position in the hierarchy by adopting vegetarianism and teetotalism, and by Sanskritizing its ritual and pantheon. "In short, it took over, as far as possible, the customs, rites and beliefs of the Brahmins, and the adoption of the Brahmanic way of life by a low caste seems to have been frequent, though theoretically forbidden" (M. N. Srinivas, 'Sanskritization and Westernization', in *Society in India*, ed. A. Aiyappan *et al.*, p. 73).

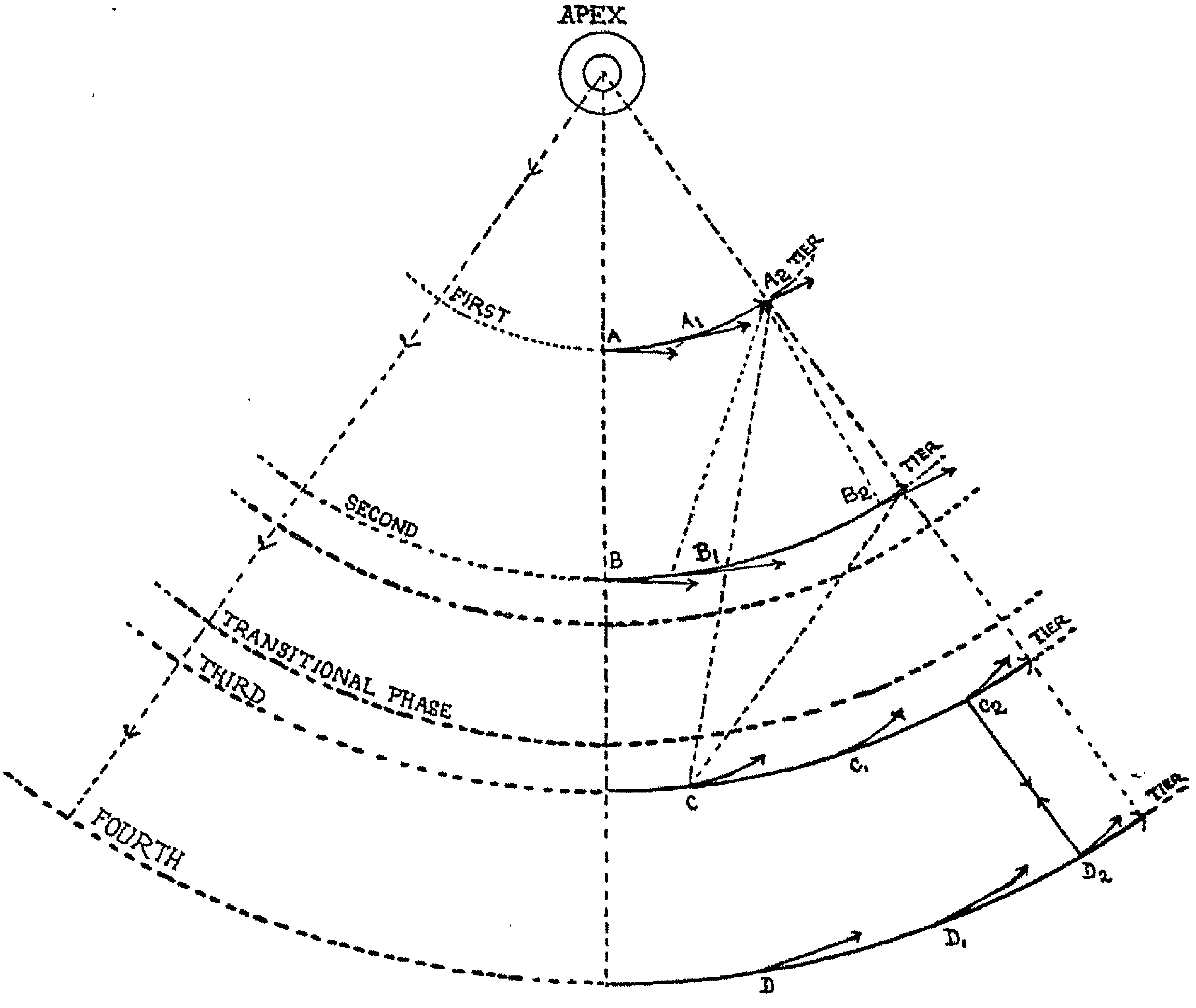
Theoretically, and theoretically alone, can such a situation be conceived, but when we come to concrete cases, our knowledge of caste dynamics and our experience do not fall in line with such a theoretical assumption. The Chamar have certainly moved away from their original social locus—they have acculturated to higher castes—they may have become sectarian groups, may forbid drinking, widow marriage, divorce, even meat eating, but is there any example of a vertical rise in the social hierarchy? Have the Chamars approached the higher castes? If it is a process, where does the process stop, and why? A process progresses from one stage to another; the assumption that C can reach the stage of

B implicitly carries the conviction, or should do so, that B should reach A. C in this case has not reached B, and can never reach A.

The Chamars have spread horizontally, and so have the other lower castes. The lower castes see caste mobility as a horizontal movement, while the Brahmins and other higher castes have viewed such mobility as a capillary ascent, but in effect it is a different kind of movement, and a new distance scale. When one looks at the social spread on the horizontal plane one notices the inherent mobility of the caste structure. A Chamar was asked about another Chamar if he regarded the latter as of his caste or of the same status; he became excited, he violently disagreed; to him the other Chamar was remote, distant, even degraded. To the Brahmin or any upper caste, all Chamar are Chamar, he does not recognise any distance between them. They belong to the same plane and the spread does not affect the vertical distance he maintains from the Chamar. The higher castes are only concerned with the vertical ascent and they have ruthlessly suppressed such initiative in the lower castes. They have not prevented the horizontal spread of the castes, neither were they interested in the process. This horizontal spread is not merely the characteristic mobility pattern of the lower castes, it is true of the higher castes, of the Brahmins as well. If we arrange the castes on a recognised scale of social precedence—it may and does vary from State to State, region to region—we can represent this scale as A, B, C, D, E to n. A is higher than B, C is lower than B and A, and so on. This is the vertical scale. If we again represent the various sections of the Brahmin, or for that matter any caste, higher or lower, we may find A, A_1, A_2, B, B_1, B_2 as a distance scale for the castes—on a horizontal plane. A_1 is distant from A; B_1 is distant from B, and as we increase the spread, the original status of the caste no longer remains the same, as they become more and more distant from their erstwhile colleagues. Capillary ascent is a difficult process, and is not so easy to effect, but the spread on the horizontal scale creates social distance between different sections of the same caste, and between castes on the same plane, and this horizontal expansion is the greatest single factor determining caste changes and caste relations.

C can become C_1, C_2, C_3. The vertical distance from A to C,

C_1, C_2, C_3 remains the same, for the latter are on the same plane, and every point occupied on this plane is equidistant from A. The social distance is between C, C_1, C_2, because of the horizontal spread. This is the most important fact of the caste structure—and what we have been finding in the context of caste mobility, is not vertical mobility but horizontal.



SOCIOGRAM No. 8
Horizontal and vertical mobility among castes and tribes in India

This horizontal spread we have already mentioned is true of each and every caste. This process of spread at the higher level means that there is a gradual dropping of rituals, and customs and practices. A case in point is afforded by the Kashmiri Pundits, who are reported to have been dropping rituals, abandoning their

age-old ways of life, adopting dress, diet and social customs which they did not subscribe to—a process which we may call 'de-sanskritization'. This process of de-sanskritization (or deritualisation) is proceeding rapidly in all parts of India, and that is how the voltage of caste prestige has been lowered, and is on the decline.

The orthodox Brahmins, who refuse to experiment with new ideas and are illiberal of naturalisation of borrowed traits have not helped in the process of acculturation; so long as the Brahmins monopolised the priestly profession they tabooed this knowledge to others, and did not even admit other higher castes to this knowledge. They still do not do so, yet sacred knowledge has been liberated and liberalised—and the importance and the monopoly of the priestly caste have been violated, and a decline in the prestige of Brahmins has led to a horizontal spread of the Brahmins, so that A_1 is more de-sanskritized than A; A_2 is more de-sanskritized than A_1. The reverse is the case with lower castes, as among the Chamars C is less Sanskritized than C_1, C_1 is less Sanskritized than C_2. As we have already seen that there is no capillary ascent possible for C, and Srinivas himself has categorically denied any such possibility, only a horizontal spread is what we discover; the social distance between the higher and lower castes has been reduced not by capillary ascent of the lower castes, but by deritualisation and *secularisation* of the upper castes. In other words, the process of acculturation in India has been more a process of de-sanskritization (or deritualisation) than that of Sanskritization, and is a process of horizontal spread of the higher castes, which has involved dropping rituals and purity and, we may add, acceptance of tribal customs and practices, primitive ideas about powers, personal and impersonal, and even primitive magic, taboo and superstitions.

Western ideas, Western thought, and Western practices, have helped rather than hindered the process of de-sanskritization (or deritualisation). The priests, who were steeped in Sanskrit knowledge and rituals maintained their exclusiveness, but those who freed themselves from the yoke of the priestly caste began to spread on the horizontal plane—each group, more Westernised than the one preceding it; A_3 more Westernised than A_2, A_2 more than A_1. All castes and communities did not receive the light

of Westernisation, not of the same kind—and there was no 'filter' exercised by the Brahmins, but through the intelligentsia, a new category which included castes, vertically as well as horizontally situated. The Brahmo Samaj is an example in point, and Bengali literature is one more focus through which Western influence permeated. The process of de-Kulinisation in Bengal is partly traceable to Western influence, and partly to the process of de-sanskritization, or capillary descent of the privileged castes. The Brahmins, other than those that did not yield to Westernisation, had to de-sanskritize themselves to receive the rewards and benefits of Western patronage and the Kulins levelled down to de-Kulinise themselves. Kulinism at one time connoted a system of values, but the Kulins used their status to keep the rights and privileges to themselves and their children, with the result that the fact of birth in the Kulin family became the passport to Kulinism. The other factor against Kulinism was the democratic upsurge that brought claims of equal opportunity and equal status, undermining the concept and the status of Kulinism or by de-Kulinisation of the Kulins. How far dropping of rituals and traditional practices can decapillarise a privileged class like the Kulins is to be seen in the complete disintegration of Kulinism in Bengal. A similar fate awaits the higher castes, as Sanskritization and de-sanskritization at the two poles of the caste ladder assume more significance and momentum.

If it was a mere vertical mobility, the overcrowding at the base due to multiplication of castes would have created more friction than it has, and the sanctity of the hierarchical organisation would have been challenged long ago. The horizontal spread of the castes, as indicated before, has secured the caste structure against disintegration or decay, for it has allowed the necessary bulge on the horizontal plane—without challenging the order of social precedence. It is this horizontal spread that is now helping the castes to reorganise themselves, to combine and compete against other castes; it is this horizontal spread that is now the greatest force for casteism. The distance between C, C_1, C_2, C_3, for example, is being reduced due to the changing pattern of life and living exaggerated by technological orientation, and a regrouping, by fusion of the various sections of a caste, as we have noticed among

the Nunia or Shorgar of western Uttar Pradesh, or the fishermen castes of Nellore district in Andhra—even of the Mala and the Madiga castes of the same district in Andhra. Does it mean that there is no chance of the castes reducing the social distance between them ? The chance lies in that the various sections of the same caste A, A_1, A_2, A_3, and C, C_1, C_2, are not moving exactly on the same plane, but on tangents, as it were ; those at the top are pointing below and those at the bottom towards the top, however small the inclination may be, due, as we have said, to ritualisation or Sanskritization at one end, and deritualisation or de-sanskritization at the other end—the two-way change that is taking place in Indian rural communities.

Westernisation today stands for ideological as well as technological change, and these will affect, and have affected, both the higher castes and the lower castes. No unilinear progress, such as from detribalisation to Sanskritization, to Westernization, can be postulated as the process of cultural change in our country ; the stages need not be evolutionary or sequential. Detribalisation is being rapidly effected by technological change, de-sanskritization has been working for tribalism and casteism, and any intensive study of a tribal and rural community will show how ignorant we are of the processes of change in a traditionally hierarchical society with different scales of values and social distances. Coorg and Rampura may indicate one process, Mohana does another, and regional differences and ecology influence social change.

To conclude, we are not very happy about the tool that we have used to describe the process of cultural change. This has also been pointed out by F. G. Bailey in his recent publication *Caste and the Economic Frontier* (1957). Sanskritization connotes a group of concepts and at best is a loose one, devoid of any special merit. The omnibus coverage given to Sanskritization by Srinivas makes it impossible to justify its use, particularly in the context of the vertical and horizontal mobility that we have observed. At the same time, we also feel that there is available no other term, no other appropriate concept, which we can use for the acculturative processes involved in the cultural change that is overtaking our villages and hamlets, towns and cities. Sanskritization or ritualisation would mean the same process, if

we realise the limitations of processal or dynamic concepts in the context of Indian society.

Robert Redfield recognised the need for a conceptual tool—to describe the acculturative processes in India—as he felt that these processes did not run on similar rails as in other countries. With the dynamic social change that one faces in the countryside, the need today is to search out the types of cultural change in different parts of the country, and use several concepts, not one. India has cultures, not a culture. The process of change, contact and clash of cultures have produced different types of movements for change, and no one concept or tool will aid us to interpret the processes involved. So long as we do not hit on appropriate term or terms, we may use 'Sanskritization' with an omnibus coverage. That is how I have used Sanskritization to emphasise de-sanskritization, capillary ascent to include capillary descent as well. The process of cultural change, therefore, has to be understood as a process of acceptance and denial of acculturation and transculturation, of Sanskritization and de-Sanskritization, and we shall not expect more than we should, because we cannot describe the process by any term, rightly or accurately enough. On the strength of our village study, one would be easily tempted to describe the process of change, not as Sanskritization or even de-sanskritization, but a rapid secularization of our culture, a fact which gives stability and significance to the *secularism* that India holds dear today. Religion has its hold, no doubt, but the force that is making for nationalism in the country, particularly in the villages, for tolerance and levelling up, is what I call *secularization* of our ritual life, of our traditional way of living and thinking, our cultural heritage.

Our villages, particularly those of North India, still retain their traditional complexion, the web of life, that constitutes a way, a culture. I have used the village as a concept, and so it is. Here in Mohana live the high castes and the lower castes, here they share a similar pattern of life, here they feel a kind of consciousness of homogeneity, and interdependence, also a sense of security born of living together and sharing opportunities and crises. They accept and deny, they unite and separate, they live as good neighbours but show their claws and teeth, more often than they did

before, yet they constitute a kind of society and maintain a way of life. The village structure still persists. Kinship ties produce 'we feelings', economic factors produce a *modus vivendi*, and the structure is dented, here and there, but it still persists and remains the 'genuine article'. That is how our villages have survived, and we can revitalise the village by recognising its structural strength.

If the village is a way of life, it has to be reckoned as such, and any sponsored change on our villages must be preceded by a thorough knowledge of the network of relations in the villages, of the sentiment system in the village, of the values that villagers still hold dear. Several decades ago, I read a novel by a Bengali novelist of great eminence, the late Sarat Chandra Chatterjee. It depicted the life of a rural community in Bengal, and this life was full of tension, jealousy, hostility, exploitation and tyranny. It was a mirror that repelled people and encouraged a drift to the cities, it was a way of life to which most educated people could not subscribe. This description of a village, however, made a profound impression on me. But the village Mohana has made a greater impression, as the life that I have depicted is the one that is lived, and not the one that a novelist imagines it to be. To ignore the facts of our village life is to undermine our faith in the future of our country.

The community development programme has been launched for re-building the rural India which indeed is the real India. In so far as a large population of India lives in villages, the whole outcome of developmental planning here depends in a way upon the success or failure of the vast, revolutionary programme of rural reconstruction. Aimed at bringing about a transformation in the outlook of the people, so as to make them desire progress and feel needs, and welcome new knowledge by which to achieve it, inculcating in them a spirit of self-reliance and habits of cooperation, this programme involves vital stakes not only for India but for other industrially backward countries of Asia and Africa, who are looking forward with interest to its progress. This field, like many others of human relations and engineering, provides a common focus for collaboration between sociologists and anthropologists. Microcosmic study of culture change has been the avowed technique of the anthropologist, and today we have enough

knowledge of change in hand to put it to the aid of the community planners and administrators.

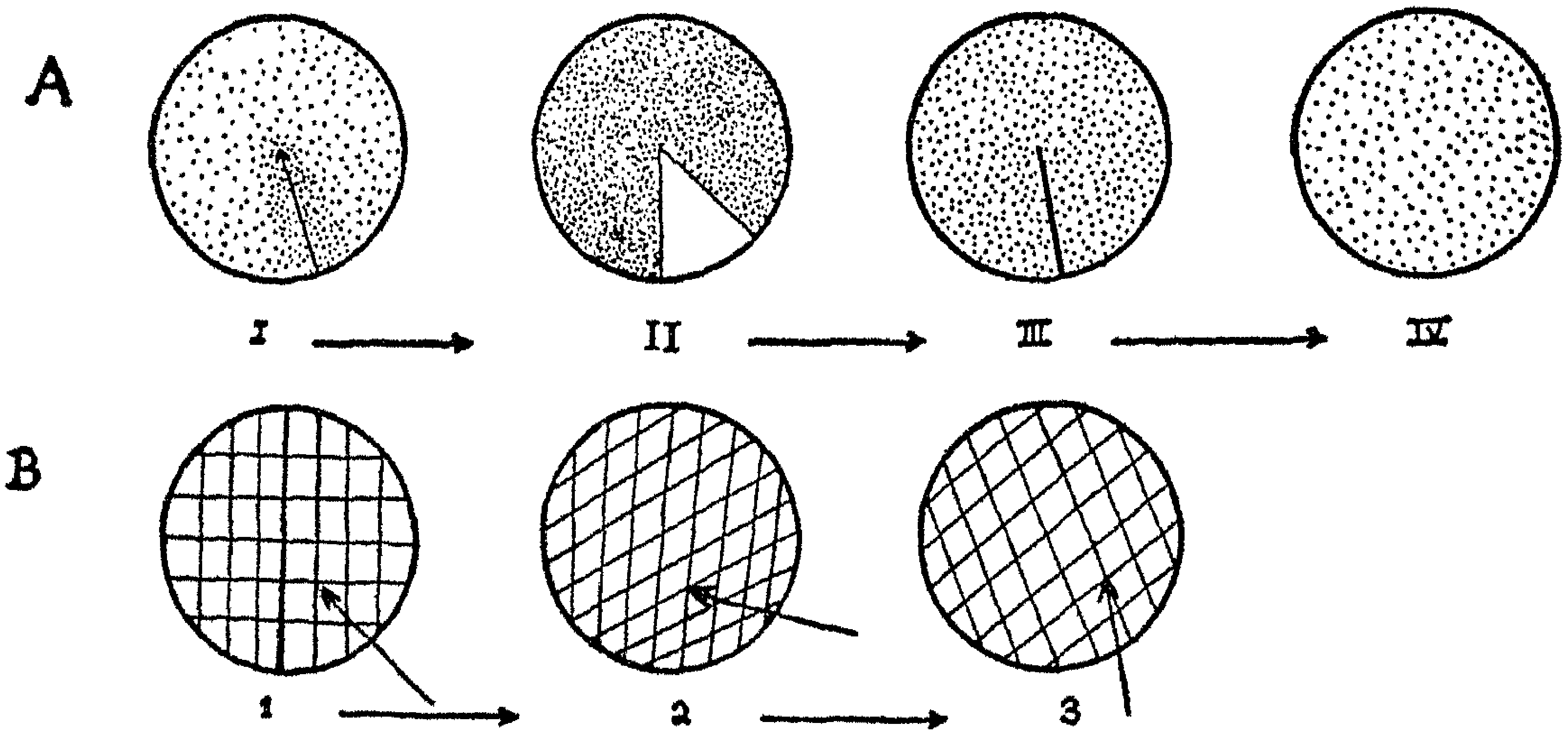
Change in any socio-cultural system implies a correlated resistance, whose nature depends upon the given culture pattern and the type of change. It is, therefore, idle to think of effecting any successful change without a reliable knowledge of the varying effects and resistances of a given change in its relation to different culture patterns. Programmes of reconstruction which are inconsistent with the basic attitudes and cultural values of the people have little chance of adoption or acceptance. Superfluous changes not only mean a waste of resources and money but they also generate new resistances. The detailed knowledge of the dynamics of culture change in different communities, based on empirical investigations, can equip us to forestall resistances and solve many of the problems of personality adjustment and inter-group conflict which follow disequilibrating or induced changes.

In the ultimate analysis the utility and productiveness of the community development programme will be judged by lasting and permanent changes it succeeds in bringing about in rural India. The community development programme and the national extension service are temporary devices aimed at providing the initial generative push in the shape of new ideas and techniques, which may later become self-regenerative in the community. The numerous empirical studies of culture change point to one important lesson: that an innovation—whether an idea, a tool or a technique—can be self-regenerative only if it is institutionalised. It has been and is the main weakness of the community development programme that it has not only failed to utilise the existing institutions but has also not succeeded in creating any new ones.

For any change in the social attitudes of the backward, rural and tribal groups, it is necessary to start with a change in their cultural environment: that is to say, technical improvement at the material productive level, and institutional change at the inter-group relational level, rather than any piecemeal attempt at converting, reforming or educating individuals. Approach through the individual foci is atomistic and in so far as a traditional tribal or rural society is a web of institutional relations, this ap-

proach is not likely to yield any lasting results in the shape of community development. In a country deeply moored in traditions and dominated by stereotypes, where individualism has not asserted itself, we cannot ignore institutional matrices and caste structures, whatever the culture-personality studies may hold out for other countries and other cultures.

This may be illustrated diagrammatically. If an innovation is sought to be introduced in a particular system *A I* through the personality focus, the first step may be a position resembling *A II*, causing some stir in the structure of the system. But since the structure has not been dented at any culturally-vital focus, its tendency would be to move towards a more stable position like *A III*, and, after a time lapse, even to revert to the original *AI*, thus not causing any change of a permanent nature in the cultural configuration of the system. On the other hand, an assault at a strategic institutional focus, as seen in *B* 1, may give a push to the entire interrelated web of social relations (*B* 2), resulting, after the maturity of the innovation, into a configurational change of a permanent nature. Here since the impact of the innovation would percolate all through the cultural matrix, the effect would be lasting.



This is only illustrative, my point being that in the actual community development programme one finds institutions like *pan-*

chayats and cooperatives and kinship groups having little place in the channels of communication. Under the new *Panchayat Raj* legislation, new *panchayats* are a statutory creation, but their form and structure are not very different from the traditional village councils and they exist only in name but not in use. Our field studies in Jaunsar-Bawar (District Dehra Dun) have shown that notwithstanding the new *panchayats* established by law, the villagers continue to use their old caste and village councils, namely, *Khumri* as a forum and arbiter for their disputes and dealings, giving the appearance of a historically mixed but contemporary functioning culture. We find the traditional *Khumri* and the new *panchayats* existing side by side, the former still supreme in community affairs and functioning as of old, and the new resting more or less in official files.

In any scheme of such vast magnitude as is the Indian community development programme, the effective lever of operation is tackling the inter-group relations, whose cultural clogging is responsible for the static appearance that our traditional social structure gives, or for the slowness of change that is manifest here. A thorough reorganising of the inter-group relations is an essential pre-requisite for any scheme of tribal or rural development. Apart from specific educational measures of reorganising these inter-group relations, they can also be changed through the lever of technical improvement at the material-productive level.

In one of my recent visits to a C.D.P. village in North India—a village which I have seen many times, and know well—I was surprised to find heaps of garbage at its entrance. I asked the village headman why the village looked so dirty, when it had not done so before. He smiled and said that the garbage would be cleared by the 'tamashawalas', meaning the Village Level Workers and officers of the Community Development Project, who have to show a clean village to the officials on their routine inspection of the village.

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Glossary

Aghan : The ninth month of the local Hindu calendar (Nov.-Dec.)

Agiari : Small-scale *havan* performed in domestic rituals

Alhakhand : A popular ballad based on a 12th century book in verse narrating the heroic deeds of Alha and Udal and their fights with the famous Delhi king Prithviraj Chauhan

Alsi : Linseed (*Linum Usitatissimum*)

Arti : The ceremony of waving a lighted lamp in front of the image of the deity or the subject of the ritual; the lamp itself bears the same name.

Asarh : The fourth month of the local Hindu calendar (June-July)

Babul : *Acacia Indiana*, a thorny tree

Baisakh : The second month of the local Hindu calendar (April-May)

Bargad : Banyan tree

Barsi : Ceremony connected with first death anniversary

Batai : Share-cropping

Been : Snake charmer's flute

Bel (*Bilwa*) : *Aegle Marmelos*

Bhadon : The sixth month of the local Hindu calendar (August-Sept.)

Bhajan : Devotional song

Bhang : A narcotic

Bidi : Leaf-wrapped indigenous cigarette

Bigha : Local land measure

Byohar : Ceremonial exchange-of-gifts relationship, such gifts themselves

Chet : First month of the local Hindu calendar (March-April)

Chikni mitti : Clay (used for plastering houses)

Chinh : Commemorative gift

Churail : Malevolent spirit of dead women

Dangal : Wrestling bouts

Dai : Midwife

Daan : Alms-giving

Desi : Indigenous

Dhania : Coriander

Dhatura : *Datura Stramonium*, a poisonous alkaloid found in the thorn-apple

Dwapar-Yuga: The third aeon of cosmological time according to the Hindu scriptures
Ekka: A type of two-wheeled horse-drawn carriage
Ghee: Clarified butter
Guru: Spiritual teacher
Havan: Sacrifice in which burnt offerings are made
Hookah: Hubble-bubble
Inam: Gift to subordinate or inferior
Jajman: Patron of a traditional village servant
Janampatri: Horoscope
Jeth: Third month of the local Hindu calendar (May-June)
Jwar: A variety of millet (*Holcus sorghum*)
Kachcha food: Boiled or baked food
Kachcha road: Unmetalled road
Katik (*Kartik*): Eighth month of the local Hindu calendar (Oct.-Nov.)
Keertan: Collective singing of devotional songs
Khandan: Joint-family
Khota: Inauspicious
Kodon: A coarse variety of wild grain
Kothar: Grain store
Kuar: Seventh month of the local Hindu calendar (Sept.-Oct.)
Kus: An indigenous grass believed to possess supernatural purificatory powers
Lagan: Land-rent
Lathi: Bamboo stick
Lekhpal: Patwari, village accountant
Magh: Eleventh month of the local Hindu calendar (Jan.-Feb.)
Mahawar: Red dye used by women to decorate their feet
Mahuwa: *Bassia Latifolia*
Marghat: Cremation ground
Matar: Peas
Moong: *Phaseolus mungo*, a variety of pulse
Neg: Ceremonial gift
Neem: *Melia Indica*
Nichchawar: Money or grain waved round the head of the subject of a ritual and distributed among poor people; its purpose is to ward off evil influences.
Ojha: Witch-doctor
Pakka food: Fried food
Pakka road: Metalled road
Peepal: *Ficus Religiosa*
Phaag: Special songs sung during Holi

Phagun : Twelth month of the local Hindu calendar (Feb.-March)
Pooja : Worship in the traditional Hindu way
Poos : Tenth month of the local Hindu calendar (Dec.-Jan.)
Purohit : Priest
Rathi or *tikti* : The bier on which a corpse is borne to the cremation ground
Sakarkand : Sweet-potato
Sawan : Fifth month of the local Hindu calendar (July-Aug.)
Shastrarth : Debate on the meaning of scriptures
Sloka : Hymn or Libations
Sradh : The Hindu ceremony of making offerings in the name of the dead
Supari : Betel-nut
Tat : Gunny cloth
Tulsi : Sweet basil (*Ocymum Sanctum*)
Ubtan : A cosmetic paste
Urd : A pulse (*Phaseolus radiatus*)
Vakil : Pleader, advocate

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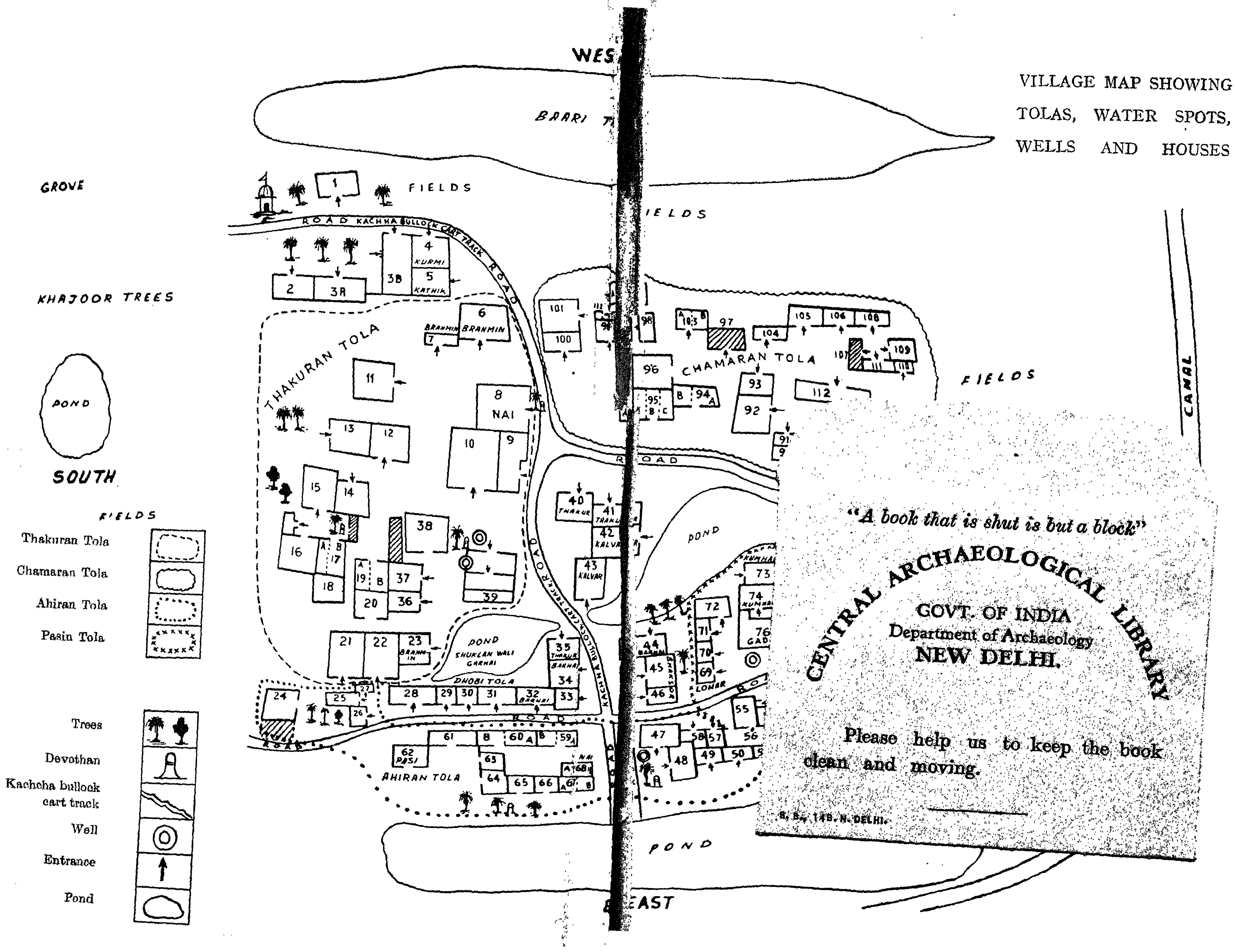
Village Life

VILLAGE MAP SHOWING TOLAS, WATER SPOTS, WELLS AND HOUSES



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